NATION

BSF adds drone warfare to its training syllabus

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BUSINESS

FPIs pull out ₹7,945 crore in Sept

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SPORTS

Max Verstappen wins in Baku as Oscar Piastri crashes out

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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$100K charge kicks in for new H1B visa applicants

WASHINGTON, 21 SEPT

As the deadline passed on Saturday, the US government confirmed that the new $1,00,000 H1B visa petition fee is now in effect, but only for new applicants. The move sparked confusion and panic among Indian tech workers, many of whom feared they'd be barred from returning to the US without paying the hefty fee. Clearing the air, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt stated that the fee is a one-time charge, not annual, and does not apply to existing H-1B visa holders, re-entry, or renewals. "H1B visa holders can leave and re-enter the country as they normally would," she posted on X. The fee will apply beginning with the next H1B lottery cycle.*—PTI*

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Encounter breaks out between Army, terrorists in J&K

JAMMU/MENDHAR, 21 SEPT

Army troops exchanged fire with terrorists in a forest area in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, officials said. However, there was no immediate report of any casualty the officials said. "Alert troops of White Knight Corps at around 1pm today, while carrying out an intelligence based operation in general area of Kishtwar, have established contact with terrorists. Fire exchanged with terrorists. Operation is in progress," the Army said in a post on X. Meanwhile, Security forces launched a massive anti-terrorist operation covering over a dozens places in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district following information about suspicious movement, officials said. Joint searches were underway in different areas under of Surankote, Mendhar, Gursai, Poonch and Mandi, they said. *—PTI*

K'taka caste survey begins, 7 cr people to be covered

It may be delayed by a day in B'luru amid formation of GBA

BENGALURU, 21 SEPT

Karnataka is set to launch its Social and Educational Survey, widely known as the 'caste census', from Monday, amid intense mobilisation by various communities to consolidate their population strength. The survey, to be conducted by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, will run till 7 October and cover approximately 7 crore people across 2 crore households.

The exercise will involve around 1.75 lakh enumerators, mainly government school teachers, and will use a 60-question questionnaire. The entire operation is expected to cost Rs 420 crore and will be conducted digitally using a dedicated app.

However, the start may be delayed by a day or two in parts of Greater Bengaluru, where five new municipal corporations have been formed. Authorities have sought more time for training and final preparations.

The exercise will involve around 1.75 lakh enumerators *PHOTO: PTI*

Controversy has surrounded the castes list included in the survey, particularly entries showing dual religious identities, such as 'Kuruba Christian', 'Brahmin Christian', and 'Vokkaliga Christian'. These listings sparked criticism from both within and outside the ruling Congress.

Responding to concerns, Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik clarified that the list used in the handbook is for internal use and holds no legal status. To avoid confusion, the 33 caste names with dual religious identities will now be "masked" in the app — meaning they will not appear in the drop-down menu for surveyors. However, individuals may still self-identify with these castes if they choose to.

"Our survey starts on 22 September. All preparations are complete. To address public concerns, we decided that certain caste names will not be prompted to enumerators. However, these names will remain in the system for voluntary disclosure," Naik said.

He reiterated that the aim is to conduct the survey scientifically and with sensitivity, ensuring accurate representation while addressing community apprehensions. *—PTI*

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DASARA VIBES IN THE AIR

Dolls depicting mythological characters are put up for sale in Malleshwaram as part of Dasara festivities. The 11-day celebration begins Monday, culminating with Vijayadashami on 2 October *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Pak PM equates Kashmir with situation in Gaza

ISLAMABAD, 21 SEPT

During a recent speech in London, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif drew attention by linking the situation of Kashmir with Gaza's conflict, claiming that talks with India will not be possible until Kashmir's situation is resolved, said sources.

According to sources, the PM in his speech said "the blood of millions of Kashmiris would not go in vain", later, which he compared the situation with Gaza, where over 64,000 people died. He said that New Delhi must decide whether it wants a good neighbourly relationship or hostility, adding that the billions spent on war between India and Pakistan should be spent on the people and their prosperity.

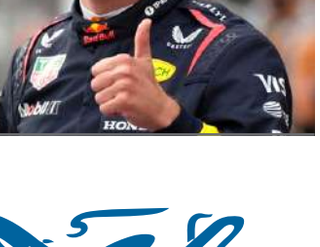
SHARIF TO MEET TRUMP

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would meet US President Donald Trump along with a select group of Muslim leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly annual session, it was announced on Sunday. He will visit the US from 22-26 September. *—Agencies*

2 TAX SLABS

Daily essentials get cheaper as GST 2.0 kicks in

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT



Starting Monday, a wide range of goods and services will become cheaper as GST 2.0 comes into effect, slashing rates on around 375 items. The move, aligned with the start of Navaratri, aims to boost consumption and provide relief to households.

The new GST structure will now feature two main slabs, 5 per cent and 18 per cent, replacing the earlier four-tier system of 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent, and 28per cent. Ultra-luxury items and tobacco products will attract higher taxes, with some facing 40per cent GST plus cess.

Essential kitchen items like ghee, butter, paneer, oil, biscuits, coffee, tea, dry fruits, ice cream, and namkeen are set to be more affordable. FMCG giants such as Dabur, Nestle, HUL, Amul, ITC, P&G, Emami, and RCPL have revised their MRPs and begun dispatching updated stock.

For instance, Dabur has reduced Real Juice (1L) to Rs 122 from Rs 130 and Chyawanprakash (900g) to Rs 440 from Rs 475. Nestle has cut Maggi (600g) to Rs 116 and Nescafe Gold to Rs 755. Amul has dropped butter (100g) to Rs 58 and ghee (1L) to Rs 610. Cosmetics and toiletries like soaps, shampoo, toothpaste, baby diapers, face powders, and shaving products now attract only 5per cent GST. Services like beauty salons and gyms will now be taxed at 5 per cent without input credit. GST on automobiles has also been reduced to 18 per cent and 28 per cent for small and big cars, respectively, leading carmakers to announce price cuts. *—PTI*

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PM URGES INDIANS TO GET RID OF FOREIGN PRODUCTS

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Addressing the nation on Sunday, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** urged citizens and businesses to embrace swadeshi (indigenous) products, linking their promotion to national prosperity. His remarks come on the eve of the GST 2.0 rollout and amid rising US tariffs, signalling a renewed push for economic self-reliance.

Calling the revised GST regime a major step towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Modi said the new tax structure, combined with higher income tax exemption (Rs 12 lakh annually), will be a "double bonanza" for citizens, expected to save them Rs 2.5 lakh crore through lower taxes and increased disposable income.

Modi encouraged every household to become a "symbol of swadeshi" and every shop to be decorated with Indian-made goods.

He pointed out how imported products, like something as simple as a comb, have quietly become part of daily life. Calling on states to support manufacturing and attract investment, Modi said Centre-state cooperation is key fOr a self-reliant India.— *PTI*

UK, Canada, Australia recognise Palestinian state

LONDON/TORONTO, 21 SEPT

In a coordinated diplomatic shift, the UK, Canada, and Australia on Sunday formally recognised a Palestinian state, defying strong opposition from the US and Israel. The announcements come ahead of the UN General Assembly, where more countries, including France, are expected to follow.

British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** said the recognition aims to "revive hope of peace" and affirmed that Hamas will have no role in any future Palestinian governance. Though largely symbolic, the move holds historic weight, especially from the UK, which once governed Palestine and issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney confirmed the move on X, saying it is necessary to "preserve the possibility of a two-state solution." Canada's shift follows growing dismay in the West over the genocide in Gaza and aggressive Israeli settlement in West Bank. *—PTI*

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Handshake drama returns: Sky snubs Pak Captain again

DUBAI, 21 SEPT

The highly anticipated Super Four clash between India and Pakistan in the Asia Cup 2025 on Sunday was once again overshadowed by off-field theatrics, as the ongoing handshake controversy between captains Suryakumar Yadav and Salman Agha took centre stage.

During the toss at the Dubai International Stadium, all eyes were on the two captains following their earlier group-stage snub on 14 September. This time, India won the toss and opted to bowl first, but Suryakumar Yadav once again avoided shaking hands with Salman Agha. Instead, he greeted commentator Ravi Shastri with a warm embrace and also shook hands with match referee Andy Pycroft, reigniting the controversy.

After the toss, Suryakumar had a brief exchange with the Pakistan skipper but swiftly walked away, adding fuel to the media buzz surrounding the tense dynamic between the two leaders.

Explaining his decision at the toss, Suryakumar said, "We are going to bowl first.

Suryakumar Yadav walks past Pakistan's captain Salman Agha, ahead of the Asia Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan in Dubai on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

It's a good pitch. Some dew came during practice last night. ." At the time of publication Pakistan were 149/5 at 18.3 overs. *—PTI*

EC to rollout SIR in entire India by 30 Sept

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

The Election Commission has asked its state election officers to be ready for the SIR by 30 September, in an indication that the poll authority could launch the voter list cleanup exercise as early as October-November.

According to officials, at a conference of state chief electoral officers (CEOs) here earlier this month, the EC top brass asked them to be ready for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) rollout in the next 10 to 15 days. But for the sake of greater clarity, the deadline of 30 September was set.

The CEOs have been told to keep voter lists of their states, published after the last SIR, ready.

Several state CEOs have already put up the voter lists published after their last SIR on their websites.

The website of the Delhi CEO has the voter list from 2008, when the last intensive revision took place in the national capital.

In Uttarakhand, the last SIR took place in 2006 and the electoral roll from that year is now on the state CEO's website.

The last SIR in states will serve as the cut-off date, just as the 2003 voter list of Bihar is being used by the EC for intensive revision.

The EC has said that after Bihar, SIR will be carried out in the entire country.

Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are due in 2026. *—PTI*

FESTIVITIES MARRED BY ROW

Booker winner Banu to inaugurate Dasara today

- Banu Mushtaq will inaugurate the festival during the auspicious 'Vrushchika Lagna' on 22 September, between 10.10 am and 10.40 am.

MYSURU, 21 SEPT

Mysuru is once again ready to don its festive finery for the annual Dasara celebrations, marking the continuation of a tradition that dates back to 1610. Known as the "Nada Habba" or State festival, Dasara is set to be a grand 11-day event culminating on Vijayadashami, 2 October.

Celebrated as one of Karnataka's most significant festivals, Dasara showcases the State's rich cultural heritage and royal legacy. Originally patronised by the Mysuru dynasty, the festival today is organised by the Karnataka government, featuring religious and cultural programmes steeped in tradition.

This year's festivities have stirred controversy over the invitation extended to International Booker Prize winner Banu Mushtaq to inaugurate the event. The Supreme Court dismissed a plea challenging the state's decision, clearing the way for her to officially open the celebrations.

Mushtaq will inaugurate the festival during the auspicious 'Vrushchika Lagna' on 22 September, between 10.10 am and 10.40 am, by showering flowers on the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari, the city's presiding deity, at the Chamundeshwari temple atop Chamundi Hills. The event will be attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his cabinet colleagues, and senior officials. Mysuru's Dasara remains a vivid celebration of Karnataka's history, culture, and spirituality, attracting thousands of devotees and tourists each year. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Census to use face detection to beat KYC, Aadhaar issues

Each household will be geo-tagged & assigned a UHID

BENGALURU, 21 SEPT

As Karnataka prepares to begin its Social and Educational Survey on 22 September, the State Backward Classes Commission has introduced technological upgrades and addressed several logistical concerns to ensure smooth implementation of the highly anticipated exercise.

Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik said face recognition technology has been integrated into the survey app to address KYC (Know Your Customer) and Aadhaar authentication issues. "Otherwise, our preparation is complete," he confirmed.

Each household will be geo-tagged using its electricity meter number and assigned a Unique Household ID (UHID). Additionally, ration card and Aadhaar details will be linked to mobile numbers.

For residents not at home during the visit, and to resolve grievances, a helpline (8050770004) has been launched. Citizens may also participate online.

Community mobilisation is also gaining momentum. Prominent Vokkaliga leaders have urged members to identify their religion as 'Hindu' and caste as simply 'Vokkaliga', avoiding sub-caste specification unless essential.

However, confusion persists among Veerashaiva-Lingayats. Some leaders have advised members to list their caste as 'Veerashaiva-Lingayat', while others suggest declaring it as a separate religion, highlighting internal differences within the community.

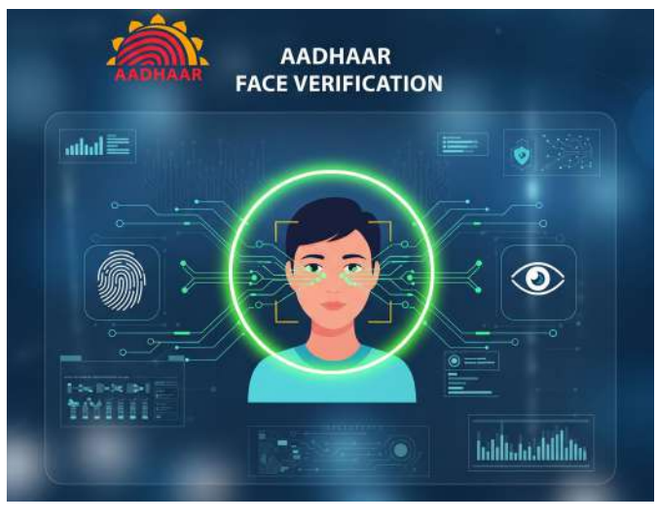
Kurubas, Muslims, Scheduled Castes, Brahmins, and other groups have also held meetings to strategise how best to identify themselves, as caste numbers may influence future policy and welfare schemes.

This isn't Karnataka's first attempt.

A similar caste survey conducted in 2015 at a cost of ₹165.51 crore was eventually discarded. On June 12 this year, the Karnataka Cabinet approved the fresh survey, invoking Section 11(1) of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995, which mandates a revision every 10 years.

Clarifying the survey's purpose, Karnataka Home Minister G Parmeshwara said, "This is not going to be used for reservations. It is to assess the social and educational progress of communities, and data can be used to plan government schemes for the deprived."

The survey is scheduled to run till 7 October. *—PTI*



A similar caste survey conducted in 2015 at a cost of ₹165.51 crore was eventually discarded **PHOTO: AI**

- For residents not at home during the visit, and to resolve grievances, a helpline (8050770004) has been launched. Citizens may also participate online.

BJP accuses Congress of 'dividing' Hindus

BENGALURU, 21 SEPT

The Opposition BJP on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Congress-led Karnataka government over the upcoming caste survey, accusing it of attempting to "divide Hindus" in the name of the Social and Educational Survey, set to begin on 22 September.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra urged people of all castes and communities to declare their religion as 'Hindu' in the survey, calling it essential for the "unity, integrity, and security" of the country.

"The state government has no right to conduct a caste census," he said, adding, "This is a conspiracy by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government."

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, speaking in Hubballi, alleged that the Congress is working under the direction of Sonia Gandhi and her "fake Gandhi family" to divide Hindu society and weaken the country by encouraging religious conversions and appeasement politics.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka echoed similar concerns, claiming that the Congress has made an "anti-Hindu agenda" central to its governance. *—PTI*

Hassan: Lord Ganesha idol 'desecrated' at temple

HASSAN, 21 SEPT

A Lord Ganesha idol at a temple in Belur town here was allegedly desecrated with a pair of footwear placed on it, leading to outrage among locals, police sources said on Sunday.

The footwears was noticed by locals on Sunday, who routinely visit the temple in the morning to offer prayers.

The locals staged a protest demanding action against the miscreants who were behind the incident.

However, following the analysis of footage captured by CCTV cameras nearby, police suspect that, prima facie, it was an act of a woman, who seemed to be mentally ill, sources said.

The CCTV footage shows the woman's face covered with a cloth and there seems to be a similarity in the footwear wearing which she was seen entering the temple and the one placed on the idol, they added.

Superintendent of Police Mohammad Sujeetha and local administration officials visited the site, and tried to convince the protesters and assess the situation.

A case has been registered based on a complaint by the temple officials. The SP assured the protesters that justice would be done, and informed that teams have been formed to nab accused.

Meanwhile, priests performed a purification ritual for the desecrated Ganapati idol, sources said.

BJP leader and MLC CT Ravi, who visited the temple along with Belur MLA H K Suresh, condemning the act, termed it an act of "instigating Hindus" and demanded a comprehensive probe to find those behind it. *—PTI*

FELINE FLAIR

A purr-fectly stylish cat struts in pet goggles at the Championship Cat Show, hosted by the Feline Club of India at Bengaluru's Jayamahal Palace on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

5 burglars held, valuables worth Rs 87L found

UDUPI, 21 SEPT

Five interstate burglars were arrested in a jewellery workshop break-in earlier this month, and gold, silver and cash worth Rs 87.48 lakh were recovered from them, Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar said. The accused, all residents of Solapur district in Maharashtra, are Shubham Tanaji Sathe, 25; Praveen Appa Sathe, 23; Nilesh Bapu Kasturi, 19; Sagar Dattatreya Kandgale, 32; and Rohit Shrimant Bhagav, 25. The gang had broken into Vaibhav Gold and Silver Melting and Refinery, located near Chittaranjan Circle, on 8 September, disabled the CCTV cameras, and fled with 748.8 grams of gold, silver articles, and cash. Acting on leads, a police team tracked them to Nimhav in Solapur, where the stolen property, valued at Rs 87.48 lakh, was seized along with the car used in the crime. *—PTI*

HONOURING ANCESTORS

As part of the Hindu ritual of Pitru Paksha, people offer pindas to their ancestors on Mahalaya Amavasya near the Kashi Vishwanatha Temple in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Ramalinga Reddy defends temple service fee hike

BENGALURU, 21 SEPT

Transport and Excise Minister Ramalinga Reddy on Sunday hit back at the BJP over the issue of temple service fee hikes, accusing the previous government of misleading the public under the guise of religion.

Reddy alleged that during its tenure from 2019 to 2023, the BJP raised worship service fees in 24 Hindu temples across the state. "This is the peak of intellectual decadence. The BJP's attempt to create misconceptions in the name of religion is nothing but hypocrisy," he said, calling the party "fake Dharmarakshaks."

He clarified that under the current Congress-led government, there has been no direct intervention in temple service fees. "Of the 35,554 temples in Karnataka, only 14 have seen fee increases, and those were based on requests by their respective management boards," he stated.

According to Reddy, the last revision in these temples occurred 7 to 15 years ago, and the updated fees are intended to support temple maintenance and development.

He accused the BJP of exploiting religious sentiments for political gain. "Those who claim to be 'pro-Hindu' are constantly misleading people. I pray God gives them the wisdom to stop creating fires between religions," he added. *—ANI*

BJP to hold protest against bad roads

SHIVAMOGGA, 21 SEPT

- Congress government in the State is facing intense criticism from various sections claiming that roads in the state, especially those in Bengaluru are riddled with potholes. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has set one month deadline to fix all potholes.

BJP will stage 'rasta roko' (Road blockade) on 24 September, in all 224 Assembly constituencies in Karnataka, protesting against the condition of the roads across the State, party President BY Vijayendra said on Sunday.

Congress government in the State is facing intense criticism from various sections claiming that roads in the state, especially those in Bengaluru are riddled with potholes. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has set one month deadline to fix all potholes.

Speaking to reporters here in this backdrop, Vijayendra said, "We have given a call that on 24 September party workers will stage a protest against the condition of roads filled with potholes in all the 224 Assembly constituencies of the state. It is across the state, whether it is Bengaluru, Shivamogga, Vijayapura, Kalaburgai".

"People are upset with the state of roads. We will hold 'Rasta Roko' for one hour from 11 am," he said.

Responding to the issue, Siddaramaiah on Saturday set a one-month deadline to fix all potholes and restore roads to good condition.

Online trucking platform BlackBuck decided to move the company out of its current location at Bellandur on Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road (ORR), citing commuting and road infrastructure issues. *—PTI*

After public outrage, officials repair potholes on Panathur Road, Siddanna Layout and Basavanagudi in Bengaluru **PHOTOS: SALAR**

Kolar burglary accused arrested after 23 years

KOLAR, 21 SEPT

Kolar police have arrested a man who had been evading court hearings for 23 years after securing bail in a house burglary case.

The accused, Moula Basha, now 45, was arrested on 19 September from Medihalli village in Hoskote taluk, Bengaluru Rural district. He had committed a theft at the home of a lone woman in Muneswaranagar, Kolar, in 2002. Though initially arrested and granted bail, he fled.

Basha reportedly moved to North India and worked as a lorry cleaner for several years before quietly returning to his native village, where he resumed work as a lorry cleaner and stone carver. Over the years, proclamation orders and warrants were issued regularly, and the case was listed under Long Pending Reports. Kolar SP B Nikhil, while reviewing such cases, tasked Inspector Sadananda with locating Basha. Following inquiries, he was arrested from his residence. *—Salar News*

PALACE CITY'S PRIDE

With royal rituals & air show, Mysuru gears up for Dasara

MYSURU, 21 SEPT

Mysuru, renowned as the palace city, is gearing up for the much-awaited Dasara festival, celebrated with grandeur and traditional fervour. During these auspicious days of Navaratri, the city will be adorned with "Deepalankaara", illuminations that beautify the palace, major streets, turnarounds, and prominent buildings, creating a spectacular visual treat for residents and visitors alike.

The cultural scene will be vibrant this year, with numerous artists and troupes from across Karnataka performing at various venues. Events such as food melas, flower shows, farmers' Dasara, women's Dasara, Yuva Dasara, children's Dasara, and poetry recitals promise to attract diverse crowds and enrich the festive atmosphere.

However, this year's inauguration has sparked controversy. Traditionally, Dasara begins with Vedic rituals and floral offerings to Goddess Chamundeshwari. Critics have argued that the choice of the guest of honour undermines these religious sentiments and longstanding customs. BJP leaders have particularly objected, following the circulation of an old video in which the guest reportedly expressed reservations about worshipping the Kannada language as "Goddess Bhuvaneshwari," deeming it exclusionary to minorities. The guest, Mushtaq, has defended herself, claiming her statements were selectively edited and misrepresented on social media.

The cultural programmes will be centred around the magnificently illuminated Ambavilasa Palace, which will host acclaimed artists from both the state and national levels. Among the highlights of the festival are the famed Dasara procession, known as Jamboo Sawari, the Torch Light Parade, and the Mysuru Dasara Exhibition, events that consistently draw large crowds.

The grand finale, the world-famous Jamboo Savaari, will take place on Vijayadashami, 2 October **PHOTO:PTI**

Adding to the excitement, the Indian Air Force will conduct its much-anticipated Dasara Air Show at Bannimantap Grounds on 27 September and 1 October, showcasing aerial skills to the delight of spectators.

Navaratri celebrations will also see widespread decorations and rituals in homes across Mysuru and neighbouring areas. Traditional practices such as Gombe Habba (arrangement of dolls), Saraswati Pooja, Ayudha Pooja, and Durga Pooja will be observed with devotion and enthusiasm.

The royal family will mark the festival with time-honoured traditions inside the palace. Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, scion of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family, will don grand attire to conduct the Khasagi Durbar, a private durbar where he will ascend the golden throne amid the chanting of Vedic hymns, symbolising continuity of heritage.

The grand finale, the world-famous Jamboo Savaari, will take place on Vijayadashami, 2 October. This majestic procession features caparisoned elephants carrying the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari in a gold-covered Howdah. The lead elephant, 'Abhimanyu', who has been carrying the 750 kg Howdah since 2020, is expected to perform the duty again this year.

Historically, Dasara was celebrated by the Vijayanagar rulers and later inherited by the Wadiyars of Mysuru. The Wadiyar King Raja Wadiyar I initiated festivities in 1610. After the abolition of the privy purse in 1971, the royal family's Dasara celebrations became private affairs. A subdued public celebration continued locally until 1975, when then Chief Minister D. Devaraja Urs revived the grand state festival, which has been celebrated annually since.

In anticipation of the large crowds, police have made elaborate security and crowd management arrangements to ensure a smooth and safe Dasara celebration this year.

With a blend of vibrant culture, royal traditions, and community participation, Mysuru's Dasara festival remains one of India's most iconic and eagerly awaited celebrations. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Centre to set up mediation council: Union Minister

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Sunday said progress is being made in establishing the Mediation Council of India and promised to share the "good news" soon. Speaking at an arbitration and mediation conference, he acknowledged concerns that the council has not been set up years after the Mediation Act was passed. Attorney General R Venkataramani recently attributed the delay to a shortage of human resources, a challenge affecting many statutes. The Mediation Act proposes a council to regulate mediators, register them, and recognise mediation service providers and institutes. It also outlines which disputes are suitable or unsuitable for mediation, aiming to strengthen alternative dispute resolution in India. *—PTI*

PM Modi to unveil Rs 5,000cr projects in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, 21 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Arunachal Pradesh on Monday to inaugurate infrastructure projects worth nearly Rs 5,000 crore. He will arrive at Donyi Polo Airport, Hollongi, at 9am and proceed to Raj Bhavan, Itanagar, by helicopter before addressing a rally at Indira Gandhi Park. He will lay the foundation stones for the 186 MW Tato-I and 240 MW Heo hydropower projects on the Yarjep River in Shi Yomi district, jointly developed by the state government and NEEPCO. Modi will also inaugurate a Rs 145.37crore convention centre in Tawang under the PM-DevINE scheme and launch additional projects worth over Rs 1,290 crore across connectivity, health, and safety sectors. *—PTI*

M'rashtra Dy CM Shinde's 'X' account hacked

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's X account was hacked on Sunday, with images of Pakistan and Turkey flags posted, officials said. The account was restored within 45 minutes after cybercrime police were alerted. Senior Congress leader Nana Patole condemned the breach, calling it "shocking" and highlighting concerns over the state's cyber security. The hacking coincided with India's Asia Cup match against Pakistan, prompting strong reactions, particularly from younger social media users, questioning online safety if ministers' accounts are vulnerable. Patole urged the state home department to clarify measures to protect citizens' digital data. The incident raised doubts over the security of government websites and the 'Golden Data' scheme. *—PTI*

'VHP's Hindu only garba dictat may cause violence'

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

Union Minister Ramdas Athawale has criticised the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) for advising that only Hindus be allowed at garba events during Navratri, calling the move an "invitation to violence." Navratri, from 22 September to 1 October, features traditional garba and dandiya dances. The VHP recommended checking attendees' Aadhaar cards to prevent "love jihad," describing garba as sacred worship rather than a cultural celebration. Athawale said no organisation can dictate who celebrates a festival, warning that any clashes or religious conflicts resulting from the advisory would be the VHP's responsibility. He urged authorities to ensure safety and prevent discrimination, stressing that Navratri should promote joy and social harmony. *—PTI*

Oppn flays PM's silence on H1B visa fees

Oppn asks PM to set up mechanism to resolve problems faced by overseas Indians

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

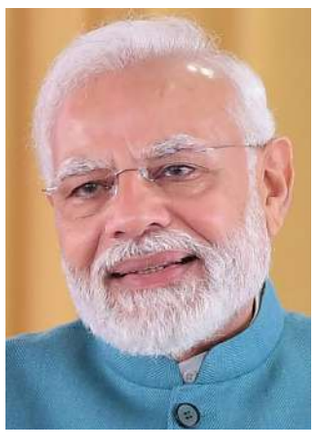
The Opposition parties on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the concerns of lakhs of Indian H1B visa holders.

The Congress questioned Modi on whether he would address US President Donald Trump's India-Pakistan "ceasefire" claims and the problems faced by visa holders.

Prime Minister Modi addressed the nation on Sunday, the day from when the revised GST rates will kick in, with the prices of a large number of products set to come down.

President Trump has made these claims not only at home in the USA, but also in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UK, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said

In a sudden move that will hugely impact skilled Indian professionals in the US,



Will Prime Minister Modi address Trump's India-Pakistan ceasefire claims, asks Congress leader Jairam Ramesh *PHOTO: PTI*

President Trump has ordered a steep hike in the annual H-1B non-immigrant visa fee to USD 100,000.

The new fee is a one-time payment applicable only to new petitions.

India has consistently denied any third-party intervention.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on 10 May to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

India has been consistently maintaining that the understanding on cessation of hostilities with Pakistan was reached following direct talks between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two militaries

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has attacked the BJP government for failing to protect the country from arbitrary tariffs and visa fees.

He said the government is unable to keep up relations with neighbouring countries, adhere to the country's historical non-alignment policy and protect overseas Indians.

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has said the suffering of Telugu IT professionals would be "unimaginable" over the steep hike in H-1B visa fee and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the issue on a "war-footing".

It is for the Union government to immediately set up a mechanism to resolve the issue amicably. *—PTI*

Trump demands Nobel Prize for 'solving' Indo-Pak conflict

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has repeated his claim that he solved the India-Pakistan conflict earlier this year with trade and asserted that he should get the Nobel Peace Prize for "ending seven wars".

He has repeated his claim over 40 times that he "helped settle" the tensions between India and Pakistan.

India has consistently denied any third-party intervention.

He added that "like with India, I said, 'look, we're not going to do any trade if you're going to fight and they have nuclear weapons. They stopped."

India has been consistently maintaining that the understanding on cessation of hostilities with Pakistan was reached following direct talks between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two militaries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it clear in Parliament that no leader of any country asked India to stop Operation Sindoor.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has categorically said there was no third-party intervention in bringing about a ceasefire with Pakistan during Operation Sindoor. *—PTI*

Abuse hurled at PM's mom during Tejashwi's yatra: BJP

PATNA, 21 SEPT

BJP on Sunday alleged that abuses were again hurled at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's late mother, this time by some RJD workers during Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav's 'Bihar Adhikar Yatra'.

The RJD, however, dismissed the allegation and claimed that a video in circulation of the alleged incident is "doctored".

Bihar saw a major controversy as abuses were allegedly hurled at the PM's late mother by a man from a stage set for Rahul Gandhi's 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Darbhanga district last month.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said that that hurling abuses at the PM's mother was an insult to Bihar and that yadav should apologise.

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Nityanand Rai also condemned the alleged incident and said that Yadav and his goons have committed a shameful act.

Reacting to the BJP's allegations, RJD spokesperson Chitranjan Gagan accused the saffron party of trying to divert the attention of the electorate from the core issues ahead of polls.

Tejashwi Yadav, who is expected to lead the INDIA bloc charge in the upcoming assembly polls in Bihar, on 16 September, the 'Bihar Adhikar Yatra' from Jehanabad.

Prashant Kishore raises money through shell companies: BJP

The BJP's Bihar unit termed Prashant Kishore's Jan Suraaj party as "a political startup based on fraud" and accused him of raising "hundreds of crores of rupees" through "shell companies".

Kishor questioned the academic credentials of senior BJP leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary.

BJP's state media in-charge Danish Iqbal accused him of indirectly helping the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan. *—PTI*

Bihar dvpt workers to get Rs 25,000

PATNA, 21 SEPT

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday announced that over 10,000 'Vikas Mitras', who work in the villages to reach the benefits of government schemes to SCs and STs, would be given a one-time allowance of Rs 25,000 each for purchasing tablets so that they can do their work effectively.

Their transportation allowance will also be increased from Rs 1,900 to Rs 2,500 per month, and their stationery allowance will be hiked from Rs 900 to Rs 1,500 per month. The government will provide Rs 10,000 each to more than 30,000 Shiksha Sevaks and Talimi Markaz, who connect children belonging to Mahadalit, minorities and backward communities of the state. *—PTI*

83% OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE

States' salary expenses rose 2.5 times: CAG

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

The committed expenditure on salaries, pensions, and interest payments increased by 2.49 times to Rs 15,63,649 crore in fiscal 2022-23 across all states from Rs 6,26,849 crore in 2013-14, said a CAG report on state finances.

A large share of the revenue expenditure is either committed or tied up.

Salaries, pensions, and interest payments on public debt and liabilities are treated as 'committed expenditure'.

During the 10-year period from 2013-14 to 2022-23, revenue expenditure by the states constituted 80-87 per cent of the total expenditure and as percentage of combined GSDP, it was about 13-15 per cent. In FY 2022-23, revenue expenditure was 84.73 per cent of total expenditure and 13.85 per cent of combined GSDP, said the publication on State Finances 2022-23.

In FY 2022-23, out of the total revenue expenditure of Rs 35,95,736 crore, the

committed expenditure was Rs 15,63,649 crore; Rs 3,09,625 crore on subsidies and Rs 11,26,486 crore on grants-in aid.

These three components totalling Rs 29,99,760 crore together constituted more than 83 per cent of total revenue expenditure.

According the report, committed expenditure on salaries, pensions and interest payment went up to Rs 15,63,649 crore in FY 2022-23.

Expenditure on subsidy went up to Rs 3,09,625 crore for the states in 2022-23.

Salaries constituted the largest component. This was the case in 2022-23 for 19 states. *—PTI*

BMC polls: 50-50 seats for Sena & MNS in strongholds

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena are likely to equally divide seats in their strongholds for civic polls in Mumbai and adopt a 60:40 formula for the rest of the metropolis, sources said.

Leaders from both parties have been told to draw up lists of such seats.

Thd formal alliance between Sena (UBT) and MNS could be declared around Diwali, when the first phase of the municipal elections will likely be held.

In the rest of the state, both parties will take a decision on the basis of each other's strength, they added. The Sena (UBT) and MNS have influence in Thane, Nashik and the Kalyan-Dombivli region.

The contest for control of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is likely to be the most intense since last year's Maharashtra assembly elections. Mumbai has 227 civic wards.

Even under this arrangement, seats in Muslim-dominated areas are likely to be contested by Sena (UBT).

Of the BMC's 227 wards, the Sena (UBT) could contest 147 and the MNS 80. *—PTI*

Centre can't answer on Nicobar project: Jairam Ramesh

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Hitting back at Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav for criticising the Congress for opposing the Great Nicobar infrastructure project, party leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said drawing the nation's attention to an imminent "ecological and humanitarian disaster" is not "negative politics" but an expression of grave concern.

The minister is simply unable to answer basic questions that Congress has been repeatedly raising on the project, Ramesh said.

"The Union Minister of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav has accused the Congress of doing negative politics," he said. *—PTI*

Manipur MP called Meiti group leader, files FIR

IMPHAL, 21 SEPT

The lone Rajya Sabha MP from Manipur, Sanajaoba Leishemba, filed a police complaint against an X user over what he called a "misleading post" implying he was a leader of Meitei organisation Arambai Tenggol.

A user on X, identified as Shalini Shukla, posted a photo of Leishemba along with a caption that "tarnished his image", a police complaint lodged by the MP's personal secretary Maisnam Shivadutta, on his behalf, said.

The complaint was sent to both police chief and cyber crime unit by the MP

"I am to enclose here a photocopy of a misleading tweet by one Shalini Shukla in con-

nection with the recent ambush on Assam Rifles personnel at Nambol Sabal Leikai," the MP stated in the complaint.

His supporters have condemened the post.

"This is a serious offence to tarnish the image of a public leader and character assassination of a Member of Parliament. This is a ploy to defame Hon'ble MP (R/S) Manipur and it is in a very bad taste," it said. *—PTI*

Hit or flop: Row continues over Ayyappa Global conclave

T'PURAM, 21 SEPT

With the Global Ayyappa Sangamam, organised by the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) in association with the Kerala government, having ended, a political debate erupted here on Sunday between the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF over whether the event was a success or a failure.

CPI(M) leaders hailed the Sangamam as a "major success", while the opposition dismissed it as a "flop", citing visuals of halls with mostly unoccupied seats during some sessions.

CPI(M) state Secretary MV Govindan was the first to respond, asserting that participation had exceeded expectations. "We had planned for 3,000 people. More than 4,600 attended. Is that a flaw?" he asked. Taking on critics, he alleged that sections of the media w ere running a "fake campaign" and even using AI-generated pictures and videos to "discredit" the event.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan *PHOTO: X/Pinarayi Vijayan*

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, VD Satheesan, said that the Ayyappa Sangamam turned out to be a "mockery driven by political motives." *—PTI*

Peace needed for J&K tourism to flourish: CM

SRINAGAR, 21 SEPT

- The CM also invited athletes nationwide to participate in the second Kashmir Marathon on 2 November.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** on Sunday emphasised that peace is a prerequisite for development, tourism, and sports in the Union Territory.

Speaking at the launch of Real Kashmir Football Club jersey, he said, "For development, tourism or sports... we need peace for everything. If the situation is not good, who will come to play in the evening?" Abdullah added that the jersey launch itself symbolises peace. He highlighted his government's focus on sports infrastructure, stating that nearly every assembly segment is seeing development based on youth interest, with facilities handed over for public use. He also invited athletes nationwide to participate in the second Kashmir Marathon on 2 November.

On the Srinagar-Jammu NH, recently affected by landslides, he said black-topping of a 300m stretch will be carried out soon, adding no vehicles are stranded. He reiterated that establishing peace is not solely his government's responsibility, despite frequent criticism. *—PTI*

BUILDING TRUST

'Army, J&K tribes must ally to better intel'

JAMMU, 21 SEPT

With terror groups now using higher ridges as safe havens in a shift in strategy, experts believe it's time for security forces, especially the Army, to review their tactics and regain the trust of Gujjar and Bakerwal nomadic tribes, considered the "eyes and ears" of the mountains.

There is growing mistrust between the security forces and the two communities that could pose a threat to intelligence gathering, which is vital for border security.

Gujjar and Bakerwal communities, with a combined population of around 23 lakh, have been crucial collaborators for the Army for decades due to their deep knowledge of the rugged Pir Panjal terrain and unwavering loyalty.

This friendship, cemented by common sacrifice, has seen

There is a growing mistrust between the security forces and the two tribes, posing a threat to intelligence gathering *PHOTO: PTI*

the tribes brave relentless terrorist attacks. Their patriotism has shone brightly in tales of valour like those of Rukhsana Kausar, who killed a Lashkar-e-Taiba militant in 2009, and Rifleman Aurangzeb, who was kidnapped and killed by terrorists in 2018 and was awarded the Shaurya Chakra posthumously.

Incidents liken the 2018 Kathua rape case and the 2020 Amshipura fake encounter in which three Gujjar youths were shot dead have weaken their alliance. .

These incidents,have isolated Gujjar and Bakerwal youths, leaving a dangerous intelligence gap on the ground.

Systemic problems have further worsened the situation. Restrictive policies have pushed many Gujjars and Bakerwals away from their nomadic lifestyle, creating insecure livelihoods and a diminished presence in the remote tracks .

A deficiency of stable communication infrastructure also undermines their capacity to deliver efficient intelligence, jeopardising a partnership long essential to regional security.

Expressing concern over the "trust deficit", Shahnawaz Choudhary, a senior Gujjar leader and Congress' AICC secretary, said the communities have not been given due value. *—PTI*

3.1 magnitude tremor shakes Gujarat's Kutch

AHMEDABAD, 21 SEPT

Two mild earthquakes struck different parts of India on Sunday. In Gujarat, the Institute of Seismological Research reported a 3.1-magnitude tremor in Kutch district at 12.41pm, with its epicentre 12 km north-north-east of Bhachau. Earlier at 6.41am, a 2.6-magnitude tremor was recorded near Dholavira. No damage or casualties were reported, although Kutch is classified as a "very high risk" seismic zone and still remembers the devastating 2001 earthquake that killed nearly 13,800 people and injured over 1.67 lakh. In the Northeast, tremors were felt in Meghalaya at 11.49am after a 4-magnitude quake struck neighbouring Bangladesh near the border. Authorities said there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage in either region. *—PTI*

Govt to introduce skill-based courses for Class 11 & 12

CHENNAI, 21 SEPT

The government is planning to introduce skill-based learning in the Class 11 and 12 curriculum, following recommendations from the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Sunday. Speaking at an event at IIT Madras, Pradhan emphasised the need for a paradigm shift in education, moving beyond certificate and degree-focused learning to developing student competence. He said the earlier education system was certificate and degree focused. "Skill-based education is a primary recommendation of NEP 2020," he said, adding that the ministry is also working to introduce skill-based learning from Class 6 onwards. Previously optional, skill education will now become a formal subject. *—PTI*

Goa's banana ripening facility to boost trade

MAPUSA, 21 SEPT

North Goa's banana trade is set for a major shift with a new scientific ripening chamber in Mapusa aimed at providing chemical-free, naturally ripened fruit, cutting wastage and boosting farmers' income. Built under the National Horticulture Mission with 35per cent Central subsidy, the Rs 2-crore facility will be ready by Dasara. It can handle 60 tones of bananas every four days, using ethylene gas under strict sensor controls to keep carbon levels below 500 ppm. Local farmers and traders will be able to use it, supplying major North Goa markets including Bardez and Tiswadi. Vendors say ends unregulated ripening methods, ensures better prices and quality, and offers relief from crackdowns. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Pavankumar Bajanthri takes oath as Patna CJ

PATNA, 21 SEPT

Pavankumar Bhimappa Bajanthri on Sunday assumed office as the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court. The oath was administered by Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan at Raj Bhavan in a ceremony attended by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, and other dignitaries. A notification regarding his appointment was issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice on Saturday. Justice Bajanthri enrolled as an advocate in 1990, practising at the Karnataka High Court. He was appointed an additional judge of the Karnataka High Court in 2015, briefly served at the Punjab and Haryana High Court. He joined the Patna High Court in 2021, where he served as a judge. *—PTI*

Govt denies notices to news channels over Urdu words

Hindi news channels 'were asked not to use' Urdu words

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

The Union government on Sunday issued a clarification stating that no notices had been sent to TV channels for using an excessive amount of Urdu words whilst broadcasting daily news.

The government's press information unit further termed as "misleading" reports in a section of the media that "notices" have been sent to Hindi news channels for excessive use of Urdu words in their broadcasts.

In a post on X, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) Fact Check Unit said that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has forwarded a viewer's complaint to the channels concerned under the provisions of the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act.

According to the Act, a certain percentage of public grievances are forwarded to the persons concerned against whom a complaint has been received, an official said.

Several social media posts claimed that the Ministry asked news channels to appoint language experts to ensure use of Hindi *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

- "The channels have been instructed to inform the complainant of the action taken and keep the Ministry duly informed, in accordance with the relevant regulations," the Fact Check Unit of the PIB said in the post.

"... media posts that MIB has issued notices to Hindi news channels for using excessive Und has directed them to appoint language experts.to teach the staff and ensure the use of hindi in its brroadcast of news...." PIB wrote on X.

"The channels have been instructed to inform the complainant of the action taken and keep the Ministry duly informed, in accordance with the relevant regulations," the Fact Check Unit of the PIB said in the post.

Reports in a section of the media claimed that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued notices to Hindi news channels for using excessive Urdu words in their broadcasts, and has directed them to appoint language experts.

These reports started circulating on social media platforms earlier this week.

Several social media posts also claimed that the alleged notice by the Ministry asked the news channels to appoint language experts to ensure the use of Hindi in the broadcasts.

Even after the fact-check, some social media handles continue to spread information regarding the appointment of these apparent 'language experts', which is leading to an uproar *—PTI*

During Op Sindoor, BSF countered drone attacks, loitering munitions and launched effective firepower against Pak *PHOTO: X/INDIAN ARMY*

BSF adds drone warfare to its training syllabus

TEKANPUR, 21 SEPT

The Border Security Force (BSF) has updated its training curriculum and added drone warfare as a mandatory subject for its troops and officers, apart from commissioning an innovation centre to develop indigenous tools for the new-age warfare post-Operation Sindoor.

The premier Officers' Training Academy of the about 2.70 lakh-strong force based in this Madhya Pradesh town has also created a drone technology lab for the students of Rustamji Institute of Technology (RJIT), the only higher education institute run by a paramilitary force under the Union home ministry.

During Operation Sindoor, BSF countered drone attacks, loitering munitions and launched effective firepower against Pakistani positions along the border.

18 BSF personnel, including two posthumously, were awarded gallantry medals for displaying courage during Operation Sindoor.

Director of the BSF Academy Shamsher Singh said the force has brought its various arms and engineering workshops, centres, RJIT and allied institutions on one platform.

The BSF has also signed MoUs with various IITs and government research organisations to prepare a road map for the tactical employment of drone technology in the border force.

A drone squadron and school of drone warfare have been commissioned in the BSF post-Operation Sindoor.

The BSF Academy created a 'police technology innovation centre' with the participation of its own expert officers, industries, startups, academicians and innovators to find solutions to challenges. *—PTI*

HC bars UP from mentioning caste in police records

PRAYAGRAJ, 21 SEPT

The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to immediately cease the practice of mentioning the caste of an accused in police records, describing the practice as a "legal fallacy" that "undermines constitutional morality" and poses a serious challenge to constitutional democracy.

The court passed the order while hearing a criminal case related to liquor smuggling.

The court directed the Uttar Pradesh government to overhaul its police documentation procedures by removing all columns and entries pertaining to the caste of accused persons, informants, and witnesses from official forms.

The FIR's prescribed format do not demand mandatory mention of caste.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Similarly, on examination of the Crime Detail Form, it's revealed that there is no para for identification of the accused based on caste and religion, the court observed. This is particularly untenable when modern tools such as body cameras, mobile cameras, fingerprints, Aadhar cards, mobile numbers, and parental details are available.

- The court directed the government to overhaul its police documentation procedures by removing all columns and entries pertaining to the caste of accused persons from official forms.

The court said the rise of digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube Shorts, and Facebook reels, which romanticise caste aggression and dominance, rural masculinity, and regressive honour codes.

The government may prepare a regulated framework to regulate and amend the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, banning caste-based slogans and caste identifiers on all vehicles. *—PTI*

Kurmis lift J'khand rail blockade post Centre's assurance

RANCHI, 21 SEPT

Agitators from the Kurmi community, demanding Scheduled Tribe status and the inclusion of their Kurmali language in the Eighth Schedule, ended their railway blockade across Jharkhand on Sunday.

The protest, led by Adivasi Kurmi Samaj (AKS) under Kurmi Vikas Morcha president Sheetal Ohdar, had affected stations in Ranchi, Ramgarh, Giridih, Hazaribag, Dhanbad, East Singhbhum, and Bokaro, causing the cancellation, diversion, or short-termination of over 100 passenger trains.

Ohdar said the agitation was withdrawn after the Union Home Minister's office assured a meeting with Amit Shah. *—PTI*

SC to hear on Jojari river contamination in R'than

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

The Supreme Court will hear a suo motu case on 23 September concerning industrial contamination in the Jojari river, Rajasthan. The court had taken cognisance of the issue on September 16, highlighting the discharge of industrial waste, mainly from textile and tile factories, affecting hundreds of villages.

The bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta will hear the matter titled, 'In re: 2 million lives at risk, contamination in Jojari river, Rajasthan.' The court noted that the pollution has rendered drinking water unsafe for humans and animals, impacting health and local ecosystems.

On 16 September, the court ordered the case be placed before the Chief Justice of India for directions on follow-up action. *—PTI*

M'rashtra ryots to get 100% crop loss relief

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

Nanded has become the first district in Maharashtra to secure 100 per cent compensation for crop losses caused by heavy rains and natural calamities, state Agriculture Minister Dattatray Bharne has said.

The distribution of relief amounting to Rs 553.48 crore will begin from Monday.

An additional Rs 20.81 crore was sanctioned for eroded and silt-affected lands. Lists of farmers impacted by crop losses are being uploaded on the government portal and the money will be directly credited into their bank accounts. Crops over 648,533 hectares were damaged in rains. js *—PTI*

60 yrs after 1965 war, UP wife recalls hubby's valour

LUCKNOW, 21 SEPT

PHOTO: AI

For 77-year-old Vijay Kumari of Lucknow, September is a time of pride and remembrance. Sixty years ago, her husband, Major Dhirendra Singh of the Kumaon Regiment, lost his leg to an enemy mine during the 1965 India-Pakistan war in Kashmir.

At just 25, Singh continued fighting despite his injury, silencing enemy guns—a feat that earned him the Vir Chakra, India's third-highest wartime gallantry award. Kumari vividly recalls receiving the telegram informing them of his bravery.

Singh's resilience was remarkable. By April 1966, he had a prosthetic leg and was posted in Lucknow. Declared medically unfit in 1971, he remained mentally tough, mastering driving and riding, and encouraging their sons to join the Army, his proudest moment being their passing out parade.

Though Singh died in April 2025, Kumari treasures his medals and the telegram awarding him the Vir Chakra. She recalls the emotional hardship and limited communication with her husband during the war, noting prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri personally met Singh at the hospital. *—PTI*

ASSAM BIDS FAREWELL TO ITS VOICE

Draped in a traditional Assamese gamosa, singer Zubeen Garg's mortal remains arrived at Sarusajai stadium, Guwahati, amid heavy rains. Thousands gathered to pay tribute as the 25-km-long procession from the airport to his home took over five hours. Fans lined roads and balconies, showering flowers and chanting his name in an emotional farewell. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said the remains would stay at the stadium till Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

300-370 ADOPTED ANNUALLY

Wait for adoption longest for special needs children: Data

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Nearly two-thirds of children waiting for adoption in India are those with special needs, even as the overall adoption numbers have seen a record rise over the years, government data shows.

The Union Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry's latest annual report states that 3,684 children were declared legally free for adoption in 2024 and 2,177 were available for placement through the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA). Of the 2,177 children, 65 per cent have special needs.

Despite sustained efforts and awareness campaigns to encourage adoption of children with special needs, the numbers remain much lower.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Special needs adoptions peaked at 401 in 2018-19, plunged to 166 the following year, and the number has since remained between 300 and 370 annually.

In 2024-25, 328 children with special needs were adopted, including a child listed in the "other gender" category.

India's overall adoption ecosystem saw a significant boost in 2024-25, with 4,515 adoptions.

India recorded 4,266 adoptions - 3,802 within the country and 464 overseas placements in 2024.

The report also noted significant structural changes in the adoption system.

Following a Supreme Court directive, CARA established an Identification Cell in July 2024 to ensure that all children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) were registered on the CARINGS portal. *—PTI*

Mohanlal thanks fans, kin for Dadasaheb Phalke

KOCHI, 21 SEPT

Malayalam superstar Mohanlal on Sunday expressed his gratitude and humility after being conferred with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Arriving in Kerala's Kochi airport, Mohanlal said that he dedicated the honour to the Malayalam film industry.

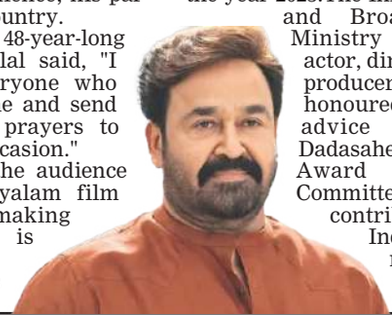
Visibly moved, Mohanlal expressed his heartfelt thanks to God, the audience, his parents, and the country.

Recalling his 48-year-long career, Mohanlal said, "I remember everyone who walked with me and send my love and prayers to them on this occasion."

He credited the audience and the Malayalam film industry for making him who he is today.

Mohanlal has been named the recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the country's highest recognition in the field of cinema, for the year 2023.The Information and Broadcasting Ministry said the actor, director and producer is being honoured on the advice of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award Selection Committee for his contribution to Indian cinema. *—PTI*

- Recalling his 48-year-long career, Mohanlal said, "I remember everyone who walked with me and send my love and prayers to them on this occasion."



Kerala excise records all-time high NDPS cases

KOCHI, 21 SEPT

Kerala's Excise Department has recorded an all-time high in narcotics cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, with 8,622 cases registered till August 2025, surpassing 2024's total of 8,160 and 2023's 8,104. Arrests have also risen to 8,505 this year, compared to 7,946 in 2024 and 8,060 in 2023.

A senior Excise official attributed the surge to increased drug inflow and intensified enforcement efforts. The state police have also logged 25,262 NDPS cases till July, slightly lower than 27,530 in 2024 and 30,697 in 2023. Officials are particularly concerned about student involvement. This year, 312 students, including minors were arrested. *—PTI*

LIBRARY OF DREAMS

Anke Gowda, 75, from Haralahalli, Karnataka, sold his Mysuru home and spent five decades building 'Pustaka Mane', India's largest free-access personal library. Housing nearly 2 lakh books, including rare foreign titles and 5,000+ dictionaries in over 20 languages, it welcomes students, researchers, and judges nationwide at no cost. Supported by his family and donors, Gowda maintains the library himself. Born into a humble farming family in Mandya, Gowda had limited access to books in his childhood, a challenge that inspired a lifelong mission to ensure others never face the same

PHOTO: SCREEGRAB

What's behind Modi's 'demographic mission?'

PM Narendra Modi's BJP has repeatedly described immigrants from neighboring Muslim-majority Bangladesh as a 'national security crisis,' claiming that Muslim 'infiltration' is leading to a demographic shift in India ***PHOTO: PTI***

On Independence Day, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** announced a "high-powered demography mission" would deal with the "conspiracy" of irregular migration.

Modi's BJP has repeatedly described immigrants from neighboring Muslim-majority Bangladesh as a "national security crisis," claiming that the Muslim "infiltration" is leading to a demographic shift in India.

"Infiltrators are snatching away the livelihood of our youth, targeting the sisters and daughters of our country, misleading innocent tribals, and capturing their land," Modi said in his 15 August speech at the iconic Red Fort in New Delhi. "This will not be tolerated."

Since then, Modi has doubled down on his declaration, although detailed operational plans have not been made public.

Many critics have pointed out that linking irregular migration to threats against jobs and tribal land rights was nothing but a ruse to justify targeting populations perceived as outsiders — especially in the Indian states that share borders with Bangladesh.

INFILTRATIONS AN ISSUE, SAYS GOVT

Home Ministry said that irregular migration from Bangladesh remained a top security concern, with most apprehensions recorded along the West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya borders.

This concern has led to periodic pushes for identification and deportation of migrants lacking legal status. Many people, most of them reportedly Muslim, have been detained or expelled to neighbouring Bangladesh.

Writer and journalist Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, who has chronicled the issue closely, said the demography mission announcement follows closely on the heels of the Election Commission's revisions of electoral rolls in Bihar, making it a key election battleground.

"The core rationale behind both efforts chillingly converges to undermine the legitimacy of a substantial segment of Indian citizens by branding them as foreigners," Mukhopadhyay told DW.

"What was once sharply opposed as communal politics is now repositioned as a form of nationalistic policy deemed politically acceptable."

SECURITY IMPERATIVE OR IS IT ABOUT VOTES?

Tom Vadakkan, a BJP Spokesperson, stated that Opposition parties are riled by the demography mission because they treat outsiders as part of their vote bank.

"As long as bonafide citizens of this country vote, there is no problem at all. There is a process by which people can apply for citizenship in India and not through fraudulent means. This is what we want to check and put a halt to," Vadakkan told DW.

He was referring to the Citizenship Amendment Act that fast-tracks Indian citizen applications from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian immigrants who escaped to India from religious persecution in Muslim-majority Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It excludes Muslims from this fast-track process, making it controversial for allegedly discriminating on the basis of religion.

The cut-off date was extended by 10 years earlier this month, making many more people eligible.

"Opposition parties benefit politically by including outsiders or illegal immigrants in their support base, which leads them to oppose governmental measures aimed at curbing illegal immigration and protecting citizenship rights," Vadakkan added.

'CLIMATE OF BIGOTRY & DEMOGRAPHIC STIR'

In 2019, an effort by the state of Assam to tackle irregular migration excluded 1.9 million people from the final citizenship list — effectively rendering their political and legal status as Indian citizens unclear. Critics said the list discriminated against Muslims and Bengali-speaking Hindus.

Kavita Krishnan, a women's rights activist, said that the exercise served "an ideological purpose by creating a climate of fear among Muslims, Bengali speakers, Kuki-Zo people from the northeast and Rohingya refugees."

"Then, the ruling BJP will consolidate the majority population around a climate of bigotry and demographic scaremongering that is essential oxygen for the party," she told DW.

"The other purpose is quite practical, demographic engineering of the electorate, by suspending the nationality status and voting rights of entire communities that are not likely to vote BJP," said Krishnan.

Ranjit Sur, general secretary of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), told DW that there are no "illegal migrants," as claimed by the BJP, terming the notion of "illegal immigration" a bogeyman created by the ruling party to stoke fear and justify its demography mission.

"The BJP and its ideological mentor, the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] are colluding to artificially change the demography of border states, especially West Bengal," said Sur.

"My team conducted field visits to border districts like Malda, Murshidabad, Cooch Behar and South 24 Parganas and found no evidence of an influx of people from Bangladesh," he added.

"Ironically, Indians cross over to Bangladesh to work in the garment industry periodically, reversing the narrative of large-scale infiltration," Sur concluded. *—DW News*

SALAR

Chooralmala lives on the edge after deadly landslide

The devastated village is accessible only through a 190-foot Bailey bridge built by the Army after the landslide ***PHOTO: PTI***

Living on the edge of a government-declared "no-go zone", scarred by last year's devastating landslide that claimed 298 lives, several families in Chooralmala wake each morning unsure whether their homes will withstand the next spell of rain.

Although technically outside the danger zone, by only a few metres, the residents live within earshot of tragedy and are urging the government to relocate them before another disaster strikes.

A major landslide struck the Mundakkai and Chooralmala regions on 30 July 2024, almost completely decimating both areas.

Entry into Mundakkai remains tightly controlled.

Former residents are permitted to return briefly to retrieve things from their now abandoned homes, while mediapersons must secure a pass and can enter only until 3pm.

The devastated village is accessible only through a 190-foot Bailey bridge built by the Army after the landslide to move heavy machinery and ambulances.

As you walk through the village, an eerie silence hangs in the air, broken only by the occasional crunch of footsteps on dried leaves and twigs.

All around, haunting sites of half-collapsed houses and crushed vehicles, narrate the scale of destruction.

Amid the ruins, some houses still stand with locks on their main doors --sign of families who left in haste with the hope of returning one day.

Friends and family members of those who perished in the tragedy often visit the area to offer prayers or relive the memories of happier times.

Among them was K Hamsa, a 54-year-old tea estate worker from Chooralmala, who lost his sister, brother-in-law, and niece in the disaster.

Living on the boundary of the no-go zone, he said, there's an impending danger.

"We are living in constant fear of what if it (landslide) happens again? Will we survive? There is an impending danger, and this is why we want to move from here, but we are not eligible," he said.

His friend and neighbour, Sudheer M, 48, said due to the landslide, two schools in the area, along with some government offices, were wiped out. Now they have been relocated to Meppadi, which is 13 km away.

"We have to travel there every day to drop off and pick up our children. It's becoming very difficult," he said.

Ummer, 62, who also works in a tea estate and lives in Chooralmala, said the marked area should be expanded to include people living on the edge of the vulnerable areas.

"I hope the government will pay heed to our request," he said.

Asked about the plight of those left out, Revenue Minister K Rajan said the government has received numerous requests and they are under consideration.

"While the appeals have already been reviewed twice, the principal secretary for disaster management will reassess them by personally visiting Wayanad to examine each case before a final decision is taken," Rajan told PTI.

"For the government, the priority will always be the welfare of the affected people and those living in vulnerable areas. Others living nearby may be covered under separate schemes or given compensation," he added.

The State Disaster Management Authority comes under the Revenue Department.

The minister highlighted that on the first anniversary of the landslide on 30 July, the government added 49 more people to the beneficiary list who would be getting an accommodation at Elstone Estate in Wayanad's Kalpetta, where a new township is being built for the landslide victims.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on 27 March laid the foundation stone for the model township that is coming up on government-acquired land in Elstone Estate. Congress MP from Wayanad Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was also present at the event.

The township shall comprise 1,000 square feet of single-storeyed houses on plots of seven cents each on the 64 hectares of land acquired by the government along the Kalpetta bypass. *—PTI*

Entry into Mundakkai remains tightly controlled ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Researchers find that poor sleep may push brain towards dementia

- These poor sleepers already performed as if they were four years older at the first assessment and showed higher levels of both amyloid plaques and white-matter damage.

The researchers, from the Mayo Clinic in the US, followed 2,750 people aged 50 and over for an average of five-and-a-half-years ***PHOTO: AI***

Staring at the ceiling while the clock blinks 3am doesn't only sap energy for the next day. A large, long-running US study of older adults has now linked chronic insomnia to changes inside the brain that set the stage for dementia.

The researchers, from the Mayo Clinic in the US, followed 2,750 people aged 50 and over for an average of five and a half years. Every year, the volunteers completed detailed memory tests and many also had brain scans that measured two telltale markers of future cognitive trouble: the buildup of amyloid plaques, and tiny spots of damage in the brain's white matter – known as white-matter hyperintensities.

Participants were classed as having chronic insomnia if their medical records contained at least two insomnia diagnoses a month apart – a definition that captured 16 per cent of the sample.

Compared with people who slept soundly, those with chronic insomnia experienced a faster slide in memory and thinking and were 40 per cent more likely to develop mild cognitive impairment or dementia over the study period.

When the team looked more closely, they saw that insomnia paired with shorter-than-usual sleep was especially harmful. These poor sleepers already performed as if they were four years older at the first assessment and showed higher levels of both amyloid plaques and white-matter damage.

By contrast, insomniacs who said they were sleeping more than usual, perhaps because their sleep problems had eased, had less white-matter damage than average.

Why do both amyloid plaques and blood-vessel damage matter? Alzheimer's disease isn't driven by amyloid alone. Studies increasingly show that clogged or leaky small blood vessels also speed cognitive decline, and the two disease states can magnify each other.

White-matter hyperintensities disrupt the wiring that carries messages between brain regions, while amyloid gums up the neurons themselves. Finding higher levels of both in people with chronic insomnia strengthens the idea that poor sleep may push the brain towards a double hit.

The study's models confirmed the well-known effect of carrying the ApoE4 variant, the strongest common genetic risk factor for late-onset Alzheimer's. Carriers declined more quickly than non-carriers, and the insomnia effect was large enough to be comparable to the effect of having the gene.

Scientists suspect ApoE4 amplifies the damage of sleepless nights by slowing the overnight clearance of amyloid and making blood vessels more vulnerable to inflammation.

Taken together, these findings add to a growing body of research, from middle-aged civil servants in the UK to community studies in China and the US, showing that how well we sleep in midlife and beyond tracks closely with how well we think later on.

Chronic insomnia appears to accelerate the trajectory towards dementia, not through one pathway but several: by boosting amyloid, eroding white matter, and probably raising blood pressure and blood-sugar levels too.

That sounds like an obvious next step, but the evidence is mixed. The Mayo Clinic researchers found no clear benefit or harm from the sleeping pills its participants were taking. Trials of newer drugs such as orexin blockers have hinted at reductions in Alzheimer-related proteins in spinal fluid, but these studies are tiny and short-term.

Cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia, delivered in person or digitally, remains the gold-standard treatment and improves sleep in around 70 per cent of patients. Whether it also protects the brain is still unproven, although one small trial in people with mild cognitive impairment showed sharper executive function after this type of talk therapy.

So the relationship is unlikely to be as simple as "treat insomnia, avoid dementia". Poor sleep often co-exists with depression, anxiety, chronic pain and sleep apnoea – all of which themselves hurt the brain. Unravelling which piece of the puzzle to target, and when, will take rigorously designed long-term studies.

Prevention starts early

The participants in the Mayo Clinic study were, on average, 70 years old at the start of the study, but other research has shown that routinely sleeping less than six hours a night in your 50s is already linked to higher dementia risk two decades later.

That suggests prevention efforts shouldn't wait until retirement. Keeping an eye on sleep from midlife, alongside blood pressure, cholesterol and exercise, is a sensible brain-health strategy.

Sleepless nights are more than a nuisance. Chronic insomnia appears to accelerate both amyloid buildup and silent blood-vessel damage, nudging the brain toward cognitive decline – especially in people who already carry the high-risk ApoE4 gene.

Good quality sleep is emerging as one of the modifiable pillars of brain health, but scientists are still working out whether fixing insomnia can truly head off dementia, and at what stage of life interventions will have the greatest payoff. *—PTI*

‘$1L H1B visa fee only for new applicants’

After a long day of panic, US says fee is ‘one-time payment’ & existing holders will not be hit

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 21 SEPT

The Trump administration has clarified that the new USD 100,000 fee for H1B visas is a one-time payment applicable only to new petitions and does not apply to current visa holders, providing a huge relief for thousands of professionals working in the US, including those from India.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said in a statement, on Saturday, that President Trump’s new H1B visa requirement applies only to new, prospective petitions that have not yet been filed. H1B petitions submitted before the effective proclamation date of 21 September are not affected. Those visa holders currently outside the US also do not need to pay the fee for re-entering the country.

White House Spokesperson Taylor Rogers has said that President Trump “promised to put American workers first, and this commonsense action does just that by discouraging companies from spamming the system and driving down wages.” “It also gives certainty to American businesses that actually want to bring high-skilled workers to our great country but have been trampled on by abuses of the system,” she said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on X that “to be clear”, the USD 100,000 is not an annual but a one-time fee that applies only to the petition. “Those who already hold H1B visas and are currently outside of the country will not be charged USD 100,000 to re-enter. H1B visa holders can leave and re-enter the country to the same extent as they normally would; whatever ability they have to do that is not impacted by yesterday’s proclamation,” she said.

“Renewals, first times, the company needs to decide. Is that person valuable enough to have a USD 100,000 a year payment to the government? Or they should head home, and they should go hire an American.” “It can be a total of six years, so $100,000 a year. So either the person is very valuable to the company and America, or they’re going to depart, and the company is going to hire an American, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had said on Friday.

Widespread panic, confusion and concern had gripped Indians in the US on H1B visas in the hours after Trump’s order to impose the fee, with many cancelling travel plans at the last minute while waiting to board flights to the homeland and several others already in India scrambling to return. —*PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Trump to award Presidential Medal to Ben Carson

WASHINGTON, 21 SEPT

US President Donald Trump has said that he will award Ben Carson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honour. A former neurosurgeon who ran against Trump for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, Carson, 74, went on to serve as Housing and Urban Development secretary during Trump’s first administration. A staunch social conservative who has opposed abortion rights and same-sex marriage, Carson has become a popular conservative speaker and author. The Medal of Freedom, established in 1963, is awarded to individuals who have made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, or cultural or other significant public endeavours. —*PTI*

Rome’s airport to open luxurious hotels for dogs

FIUMICINO, 21 SEPT

Rome’s Fiumicino International Airport is set to open an on-site hotels for dogs, the first at a major European airport, for people who are faced with the dilemma on what to do with their pet before travelling. “This project, Dog Relais, is fitting into a strategy to provide a very immersive experience to passengers,” said Marilena Blasi, chief commercial officer at Aeroporti di Roma, the company that manages Italian capital’s two airports. “In this case, we provide services to dogs and the owners of the dogs.” Basic rooms at the dog hotel cost about EUR 40 (USD 47) and feature temperature-controlled floors and private gardens. There are optional extras that range from the usual grooming, bathing and cleaning teeth services, to the more indulgent, such as aromatherapy with lavender or peppermint scents to help induce calm, or arnica cream rubbed into aching muscles. —*PTI*

Shooting at US country club; 1 suspect in custody

NASHUA, 21 SEPT

A shooting at a country club in Nashua left multiple gunshot victims, police in New Hampshire said on Saturday night. Nashua police said video surveillance confirmed there was one shooter who is now being detained by police. They said the scene is still an active investigation, but there is no further danger to the public. Information on the conditions of the victims was not immediately available. US Representative Maggie Goodlander, said in a statement, that she was “closely monitoring the tragic reports of a shooting tonight at Sky Meadow Country Club in Nashua” and that her heart was with the victims, their families and the community. —*PTI*

Ecuador approves referendum on foreign army bases

QUITO, 20 SEPT

Ecuador’s electoral council has approved President Daniel Noboa’s call for a referendum to amend the constitution, including removing the ban on foreign military bases. The vote will also ask whether the state should stop funding political parties. However, a proposed referendum on rewriting the constitution via a constituent assembly has been suspended by the Constitutional Court amid legal challenges. Noboa, who took office earlier this year, has adopted tough measures against drug gangs amid soaring violence. He aims to boost military cooperation with the US, which previously operated a base in Ecuador until 2009. —*PTI*

Trump wants Bagram Base back from Taliban

WASHINGTON DC, 21 SEPT

US President Donald Trump is determined to reclaim control of Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

“We’re talking now to Afghanistan, and we want it back, and we want it back soon. If they don’t do it, you’re going to find out what I’m going to do,” Donald Trump said, when asked about the possibility of US boots on Afghanistan soil, once again.

Earlier in the day, Trump, in a post on Truth Social, warned Afghanistan that “bad things are going to happen” if they did not comply with his demand.

“If Afghanistan doesn’t give Bagram Airbase back to those that built it, the United States of America, BAD THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN!!!” Trump warned in a post on Truth Social.”

Bagram Air Base is currently under the control of the Taliban government after the US troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. —*ANI*

Military camp at Bagram, Afghanistan **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

Trump to honour Kirk at Arizona memorial

GLENDALE, 21 SEPT

President Donald Trump and prominent members of his “Make America Great Again” movement will pay tribute to conservative activist Charlie Kirk, whose slaying has marked a signal moment in America’s fraught political atmosphere.

The memorial service for Kirk, whom Trump credits with playing a pivotal role in his 2024 election victory, is expected to draw tens of thousands of mourners, including Vice President JD Vance, senior White House officials and young conservatives shaped by the 31-year-old firebrand.

The service scheduled for Sunday will take place at State Farm Stadium, the home of the NFL’s Arizona Cardinals west of Phoenix, where Kirk’s Turning Point organisation is based. —*PTI*

The UAE had initially given a USD 2 billion loan to Pakistan at an interest rate of 3 per cent **PHOTO: X**

Saudi major source of loans for Pak: Report

ISLAMABAD, 21 SEPT

Saudi Arabia remains the major source of cheap foreign loans for Pakistan, charging an annual interest rate of only 4 per cent, a media report said on Sunday.

Riyadh charged a 4 per cent interest rate on two separate cash deposit facilities obtained by Islamabad in recent years, according to official records. The loan, originally contracted for one year, is yet to be repaid, The Express Tribune reported.

The IMF had stipulated that Pakistan’s three bilateral creditors, Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates, must maintain their cash deposits until the completion of the three-year programme. Together, these countries have provided USD 12 billion in deposits, forming the bulk of the central bank’s USD 14.3 billion gross foreign exchange reserves, the report said.

The Saudi loans are about one-third cheaper than Chinese cash deposits and less than half the cost of foreign commercial borrowing, the report added.

The UAE had initially given a USD 2 billion loan to Pakistan at an interest rate of 3 per cent, but its last USD 1 billion facility was obtained at 6.5 per cent in 2024 ahead of the IMF deal.

Pakistan also obtained a USD 1 billion loan from the commercial banks for a period of five years at an estimated rate of 7.22 per cent. Over 7.2 per cent rate is paid despite the Asian Development Bank having provided partial guarantees to the foreign lenders, it said, quoting sources.

Pakistan is also availing Chinese commercial loans, which are now converted into Chinese currency from USD. The rates on these Chinese facilities vary. The USD2.1 billion equal Chinese commercial facility is refinanced for a period of three years at roughly 4.5 per cent interest rate, said sources. —*PTI*

UK to recognise Palestinian State

LONDON, 21 SEPT

The UK is expected to recognise a Palestinian state later on Sunday despite opposition from the US, after judging that Israel has not met conditions it set over the war in Gaza. Though the anticipated move is largely symbolic, the UK hopes that it could increase diplomatic pressure for an end to the conflict in Gaza as well as help pave the way for a long-lasting peace.

Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy, who was foreign secretary until earlier this month, said an announcement on the recognition of a Palestinian state will come later on Sunday from Prime Minister Keir Starmer. He suggested that recognition would help keep the prospect of a two-state solution alive, and stressed that identifying the Palestinian people with Hamas ‘was a mistake’.

In July, in the wake of intense pressure within his governing Labour Party, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the UK would recognise a Palestinian state unless Israel agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza, allowed the UN to bring in aid and took other steps toward long-term peace.

The anticipated move comes ahead of the UN General Assembly this week, where other nations, including Australia, Canada and France, are also readying to recognise a Palestinian state.

Smoke rises following an explosion in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

91 DEAD AS ISRAEL BOMBS GAZA AS PEOPLE CONTINUE TO FLEE

GAZA CITY, 21 SEPT

Israeli forces have killed 91 Palestinians in Gaza in a single day, including family members of a prominent doctor. Several people were seen fleeing northern Gaza City, as air and ground operations intensified to capture the enclave’s largest urban centre, Al Jazeera reported.

The strikes on Saturday targeted residential homes, shelters, tents for displaced people and a truck carrying civilians ordered to evacuate Gaza City. At least 76 people were killed in those attacks.

Among the victims were relatives of Mohammed Abu Salmiya, director of al-Shifa, Gaza’s largest hospital. His brother, sister-in-law and their children were killed when his family home was struck.

Hamas condemned the strike as a “bloody terrorist message directed at doctors to force them to leave the city.”

Meanwhile, thousands of people rallied in Tel Aviv demanding an immediate halt to the war and pressing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reach a deal with Hamas to secure the release of the captives. Demonstrators also urged US President Donald Trump to pressure Israel to accept an agreement. —*ANI*

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron has sharply criticised Israel’s settlement expansion plans in the occupied West Bank, calling it a “political project” aimed at undermining the possibility of a two-state solution and denying Palestinians their right to peace.

In an interview with Israel’s Channel 12 News, Macron drew a clear distinction between the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, saying the latter has no direct connection to Hamas and that restarting settlement activities there demonstrates political motives beyond security concerns. —*PTI*

Zelenskyy seeks sanctions against Russia

KYIV, 21 SEPT

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday called for stronger international sanctions and military support to counter Russia’s escalating attacks, revealing that the country faced over 1,500 strike drones, 1,280 guided aerial bombs, and 50 missiles of various types in the past week alone.

“Russia must feel the consequences of what it is doing. Sufficient counteraction is needed to force them to seek peace. That can be achieved with adequate strength of our army, our long-range strike capabilities, and strong sanctions and pressure against Russia. Right now, we are defending ourselves from Russian attacks almost every day. This week alone, there were more than 1,500 strike drones, over 1,280 guided aerial bombs, and 50 missiles of various types,” the Ukranian President said in a post on X.

Earlier on Friday, the European Union proposed the 19th package of sanctions against Russia, targeting key sectors sustaining Moscow’s “war effort” in Ukraine. —*PTI*

Protesters try to break police line during a scuffle as they try to enter the Presidential palace in Manila, Philippines on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Protests erupt in Philippines against massive graft scam

MANILA, 21 SEPT

Thousands of protesters took to the streets in the Philippine capital on Sunday to express their outrage over a corruption scandal involving lawmakers, officials and businesses who allegedly pocketed huge kickbacks from flood-control projects in the poverty-stricken and storm-prone Southeast Asian country.

Police forces and troops were put on alert to prevent any outbreak of violence. Thousands of police officers were deployed to secure separate protests in a historic Manila park and near a democracy monument along the main EDSA highway, also in the capital region, where organisers hoped to draw one of the largest turnouts of anti-corruption protesters in the country in recent years.

A group of protesters waved Philippine flags and displayed a banner that read: “No more, too much, jail them,” as they marched in the Manila protest and demanded the immediate prosecution of all those involved in the scandal.

“Our purpose is not to destabilise but to strengthen our democracy,” Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, the head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, said in a statement. He called on the public to demonstrate peacefully and demand accountability. —*PTI*

Cyberattack hits European airports for 2nd day in a row

BRUSSELS, 21 SEPT

A cyberattack on Collins Aerospace’s check-in software disrupted operations at several European airports, causing widespread flight cancellations and delays for a second day. Major hubs in Brussels, London, and Berlin were affected starting Friday, forcing airline staff to handwrite boarding passes and use backup systems, while many other airports remained unaffected.

Brussels Airport faced the worst impact, canceling 45 outbound and 30 inbound flights on Sunday—more than double the cancellations from Saturday. The attack targeted only check-in desk systems, leaving self-service kiosks operational.

Collins Aerospace, a US-based company and RTX Corp. subsidiary, confirmed a “cyber-related disruption” and said manual check-in is mitigating the issue. The company is working to resolve the problem, but no timeline for full recovery has been given.

London Heathrow and Berlin Brandenburg airports reported gradual improvements but advised passengers to check flight statuses and use alternative check-in options.

Authorities have not identified the perpetrators, with experts suggesting hackers, criminal groups, or state actors could be responsible. . —*PTI*

AFTER IMMIGRATION RAIDS

California bans law enforcement officers from wearing masks

SACRAMENTO, 21 SEPT

California will be the first state to ban most law enforcement, including federal immigration agents, from covering their faces while conducting official business under a bill signed by Governor Gavin Newsom on Saturday.

The ban is California’s direct response to a recent series of immigration raids in Los Angeles where federal agents wore masks while making mass arrests. The raids prompted a day-long protest across the city and led President Donald Trump to deploy National Guard troops and Marines to the area.

But it’s unclear how — or whether — the state can enforce the ban on the federal agents who have been carrying out those raids. A homeland security official called the legislation “despicable”, adding that the ban would only put officers in danger.

The new law prohibits neck gators, ski masks and other facial coverings for local and federal officers, including immigration enforcement agents, while they conduct official business. It makes exceptions for undercover agents, medical masks such as N95 respirators or tactical gear. It doesn’t apply to state police. Trump administration have defended the practice, saying that immigration agents have faced increasing harassment in public. —*PTI*

ONGC, OIL to start ₹3,200 cr drilling in Andaman, WB

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

State-run ONGC and Oil India Ltd plan a Rs 3,200 crore stratigraphic drilling campaign in early 2026 targeting untapped offshore areas in the Andaman, Mahanadi, Saurashtra, and Bengal basins. The project aims to identify new hydrocarbon reserves and reduce India's heavy reliance on imports, which currently cover 88 per cent of oil and half of natural gas needs. Global energy giant BP will provide technical expertise, with the government compensating ONGC and OIL for costs, including BP's fees. The government owns the blocks and will decide on monetisation methods.

Stratigraphic drilling involves studying underground formations to assess commercial viability, with wells taking up to three months to drill and results interpretation spanning three to four quarters. Recent reforms and eased 'no-go' zones boost exploration, while data-sharing initiatives attract global firms like ExxonMobil and Chevron. —*PTI*

Gem & Jewellery show sees record sale up to 25-30T

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

The four-day India Gem & Jewellery Show (GJS2025) -- Diwali Edition -- witnessed a record sales of around 25-30 tonnes just ahead of the festive season, the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) said on Sunday. "This edition of GJS has truly been a landmark moment for our industry. The enthusiastic participation of jewellers from every corner of India reaffirmed the strength and unity of our community. With sales reaching nearly 25 to 30 tonnes, GJS2025 has set a new benchmark of success. The timing of the show, just ahead of the festive season, has infused fresh energy into the domestic industry," GJC chairman Rajesh Rokde said in a statement. —*PTI*

FPIs pull out ₹7,945 crore in Sept

The total equity sell-off by foreign investors in 2025 stands at Rs 1.38 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 7,945 crore from Indian equities so far in September, weighed down by global uncertainties such as tariffs and persistent geopolitical tensions.

This follows heavy outflows of Rs 34,990 crore in August and Rs 17,700 crore in July, taking the total equity sell-off by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in 2025 to Rs 1.38 lakh crore, according to depository data.

Looking ahead, market experts believe that upcoming macroeconomic data from India and the US, along with progress in tariff negotiations, will be key drivers of FPI flows in the coming week.

Although FPIs remain net sellers in September, with cumulative equity outflows of Rs 7,945 crore till September 19, their selling has moderated. In fact, during the latest week, they briefly turned net buyers, purchasing Rs 900 crore of equities after the US Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 25 basis points.

"For the current week FPIs bought Indian equities worth Rs 900 crore on the back of the Fed's rate cut. With two more cuts projected in 2025, liquidity in global markets could improve significantly. However, FPIs remain net sellers in September," said Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One Ltd.

Himanshu Srivastava, Principal, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, noted that foreign investors made a "modest but noticeable return" to Indian equities during the week.

He said the Fed's dovish stance, coupled with easing US-India trade frictions and India's stable macroeconomic outlook, lifted sentiment. However, he cautioned that lingering global uncertainties and geopolitical risks continue to keep flows cautious.

On the other hand, debt markets witnessed investment, FPIs invested about Rs 900 crore under the general limit and Rs 1,100 crore through voluntary retention route. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

7 top firms' mcap jumps by ₹1.18L cr

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most valued firms jumped by Rs 1,18,328.29 crore last week, with State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel emerging as the biggest gainers, amid an o — PTI mistic trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark surged 721.53 points or 0.88 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the winners, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever emerged as the laggards.

The market valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 35,953.25 crore to Rs 7,95,910 crore. Bharti Airtel added Rs 33,214.77 crore taking its valuation to Rs 11,18,952.64 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries zoomed Rs 17,389.23 crore to Rs 19,04,898.51 crore and t hat of TCS surged by Rs 12,952.75 crore to Rs 11,46,879.47 crore. —*PTI*

H1B visas, US trade talks to drive markets

The US hike of the H-1B visa application fee to USD 1,00,000 is set to impact Indian IT exporters like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro, with Nasscom warning of disruptions to onshore projects. This, alongside ongoing US-India trade talks led by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal starting 22 September, will heavily influence markets. Domestic equities will track rupee movement, crude oil prices, and GST cut on 375 items, offering relief to consumers. Foreign Institutional Investors remained active, buying equities worth Rs 390.74 crore. —*PTI*

Navaratri bonanza for buyers as auto makers cut prices

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Buyers are in for a bonanza with leading automakers Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors and Hyundai Motor India set to cut prices from Monday, coinciding with the first day of the auspicious Navaratri period.

Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz and BMW as well as two-wheeler makers are set to reduce prices with new GST coming into force from 22 September.

Maruti Suzuki India has cut vehicle prices by up to Rs 1.29 lakh to pass on the GST rate cut benefit to customers.

Prices of Tata Motors' passenger vehicles will see a dip of Rs 75,000 to Rs 1.45 lakh

Price cut on Hyundai cars ranges between Rs 60,640 on Verna to Rs 2.4 lakh on premium SUV Tucson.

Similarly, Kia India will be reducing prices of its vehicles by up to Rs 4.48 lakh. Toyota Kirloskar Motor cars will see a price reduction of up to Rs 3.49 lakh effective Monday.

Mercedes-Benz has announced price cuts ranging from Rs 2 lakh (A-Class) to Rs 10 lakh (S-Class).

BMW Motor India has announced price reductions of up to Rs 13.6 lakh across its India portfolio. In the two-wheeler space Hero MotoCorp bikes and scooters will see a price cut of up to Rs 15,743.

Additionally, Television makers are lowering the prices of their products in the range of Rs 2,500 to Rs 85,000.

Hotel rooms cheaper now

Hotel rooms with tariffs of Rs 7,500 or less will be cheaper by up to Rs 525 from Monday as the new GST rates kick in. For the hotel industry, the reduction of goods and services tax (GST) rates from 12 per cent to 5 per cent without input tax credit (ITC) is a clear growth catalyst, hospitality players said, asserting that it will strengthen revenues, encourage reinvestment, and enable hotels to deliver greater value and innovation for guests across the country —*PTI*

Healthcare to be more affordable: Pharma industry

Medicines, including some life-saving drugs, and medical devices are set to become cheaper from Monday with the new GST rates kicking in, making healthcare more affordable and accessible for every citizen, according to industry players. "Most medicines, earlier taxed at 12 per cent, will now attract just 5 per cent GST. In addition, 36 critical life-saving drugs for cancer, genetic and rare diseases, and cardiovascular conditions have been fully exempted," he added. The GST Council has also cut tax slabs on health and life insurance premiums, glucometers, and corrective spectacles, Jain said. —*PTI*

INCREASE TRADE SCOPE

India, Oman to sign economic partnership trade pact soon

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

India and Oman are set to sign the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) "very soon" with both nations eyeing diversification of their trade basket to include more commodities and exchange of services, the country's Ambassador to India Issa Saleh Abdullah Saleh Alshibani said.

In an interview with PTI, Oman's Ambassador to India said negotiations have concluded and currently the legislative and administrative processes are in motion. "Hopefully... we will reach a stage of signature very soon," he said in response to a question related to the expected timeline for signing of the

agreement.

The proposed agreement would simplify and increase the scope of trade beyond energy, into other commodities, Alshibani said.

India's key imports from Oman are petroleum products and urea. These account for over 70 per cent of the imports.

Other key products are propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, and iron and steel. —*PTI*

In a record, 28 IPOs set to open this week

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

The primary market is gearing up for a record week with 28 new initial public offerings (IPOs) set to open.

Among these, 11 are in the mainboard segment, including Anand Rathi Share & Stock Brokers, Jaro Institute of Technology Management & Research, Ganesh Consumer Products, and Solarworld Energy Solutions.

The small and medium enterprise (SME) segment is even busier, with 17 IPOs scheduled, featuring companies like Prime Cable Industries, Aptus Pharma, and True Colors.

Key dates include Anand Rathi and Jaro Institute IPOs opening on 23 September and closing on 25 September, with price bands of Rs 393-Rs 414 and Rs 846-Rs 890 per share respectively. SME IPOs such as Prime Cable Industries and Aptus Pharma open from 22 to 25 September.

Meanwhile, Kolkata-based Laser Power and Infra Ltd (LPIL), a prominent cable and conductor manufacturer, is preparing to file draft papers with SEBI this month to raise Rs 1,200-1,500 crore. Targeting a valuation between Rs 5,500-6,500 crore, LPIL specialises in electrification projects and supplies major clients like PGCIL, NTPC, and Tata Power. The company reported Rs 1,621 crore revenue in FY24, growing 31 per cent year-on-year.

It also partners with US-based TS Conductor for advanced technologies.

LPIL joins established sector peers amid steady industry growth, projected to rise from USD 10 billion in 2025 to USD 17 billion by 2032. —*PTI*

Fresh summons issued to Maxis in Aircel graft case

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

A special court in New Delhi has issued fresh summons to Malaysian telecom giant Maxis and its former director Augustus Ralph Marshall, following a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) request, in connection with the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance granted during former finance minister P. Chidambaram's tenure. The clearance concerned the 2006 takeover of Aircel by Maxis's wholly owned subsidiary, Global Communication Services Holdings Limited.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has also requested summons for Malaysian company Astro All Asia Network, which the court has approved. The CBI has sought three months to serve the summons in Malaysia.

The case centres on the approval to increase foreign shareholding in Aircel from 26 per cent to 73.99 per cent, for USD 800 million (Rs 3,560 crore). The CBI alleges that the actual Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow was misrepresented as Rs 180 crore to keep the approval within Chidambaram's limit of Rs 600 crore, avoiding the need for Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approval.

Chargesheets have been filed against Chidambaram, former Telecom Minister Dayanidhi Maran, and others since 2014. Maran was discharged in 2017, but the CBI challenged this in Delhi High Court. Chidambaram has denied wrongdoing, stating the FIPB vetted and approved the proposal.

The agency also alleges that Chidambaram and his son Karti P. Chidambaram received bribes through companies linked to Karti, under the guise of consultancy and compliance services totalling Rs 1.13 crore.

The investigation continues. —*PTI*

Industry body warns against export duty on low-grade iron ore

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

In response to the government proposal to impose 30 per cent export duty on low-grade iron ore from October, Utkal Chamber of Commerce & Industry Ltd (UCCIL) has warned that this would lead to a drop in production, domestic prices, long-term capacity losses and erosion of India's export competitiveness.

In a statement UCCIL said that the proposed export duty will also cause sectoral destabilization and a likely decline in production, thereby crashing domestic prices and an erosion of India's export competitiveness. This could result in long-term capacity losses which in turn would affect employment, regional economies, and industrial output."

Such a measure will inevitably destroy the sector, cause a collective loss of over Rs 16,200 crore to the exchequer of mining predominant states and endanger livelihoods of over five mining dependents across the states, the statement added.

Odisha is one of the major iron ore producing states as it accounts for 55 per cent of the country's iron ore output. Major producers of iron ore in 2024-25 were NMDC Ltd, Odisha Mining Corporation, SAIL, Tata Steel Ltd and and JSW. —*PTI*

Online home services mkt to hit 88B

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

India's online home services market is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18-22 per cent to reach Rs 85-88 billion by FY30, driven by a growing urban demand for convenience, reliability and speed, a report has said.

Following the widespread ado —PTI on of quick commerce, 'Instant Home Services' is emerging as the next frontier in India's digital economy, aiming to create a new habit loop for time-pressed urban consumers, says consultant firm Redseer.

The report draws a direct parallel with the rise of quick commerce, which "reshaped everyday buying" by conditioning consumers to expect delivery in minutes.

Similarly, Instant Home Services is beginning to train urban households to expect rapid fulfilment for their service needs, bridging the gap between informal domestic help and structured digital platforms.

India's eight largest cities account for 85-90 per cent of the online home services demand.

The growing demand is supported by four key trends: a cultural expectation for immediate gratification driven by quick commerce, an increased focus on trust and safety post-COVID, rapid urbanisation, and a consumer mindset willing to pay a premium for convenience.

Currently, India's overall home services market, valued at around Rs 5,100-5,210 billion, remains dominated by the unorganised sector. —*PTI*

'INDIA CAN BENEFIT & GROW'

Mining sector sees opportunities in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG, 21 SEPT

The South African government's move to ease mining regulations and privatisation of infrastructure opens up opportunities for Indian business, according to Nitin Agrawal, Group Chairman of Oza Holdings, which has assets in the mining and manufacturing sectors.

Agrawal was addressing a gathering of 36 business leaders from the NPO Young Indians, which is part of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The delegation was in South Africa in the past week as part of the G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance. South Africa holds the Presidency of the G20 this year.

PHOTO: PTI

Indian Consul General in Johannesburg Mahesh Kumar hosted the group for interactions with local business leaders, government representatives and business school leaders.

"South Africa is a large and developed economy within Africa. It has very well-established mineral reserves and resources, along with very well-developed infrastructure, be it road, rail, or ports that can handle large volumes of commodities. It has a very good way of conducting mining operations with very good regulatory frameworks," Agrawal said as he shared how businesses from India can benefit and grow from the opportunities that exist in South Africa.

Agrawal said the South African government has embarked on a major impetus to address this deterioration in infrastructure, which has been hampering progress in the mining sector.

Agarwal said the recent privatisation programme by the South African government has boosted confidence in mining sector, in turn presenting more opportunities for Indian business. —*PTI*

Ukraine war driving up power costs in India

PANAJI, 21 SEPT

Global crisis such as the Russian–Ukraine war and volatile coal markets are directly impacting the electricity costs in India where higher premiums are being paid only to secure uninterrupted power supply, a study by the Goa Institute of Management and UK's Kingston University has found.

The study specifically investigated why electricity prices in India's day ahead market is consistently higher than the real-time spot and identified coal price fluctuations, geopolitical risks, domestic demand patterns, and policy uncertainty as key factors behind it.

The research published in the prestigious journal "Energy Economics" claims to provide first systematic evidence that these shocks translate into significant risk premiums, meaning Indian households and businesses are paying higher risk premium to secure uninterrupted power supply.

PHOTO: PTI

According to Prakash Singh, Associate Professor, Goa Institute of Management, the Russia-Ukraine war significantly increased risk premiums and market volatility.

"The increases in coal prices drove risk premiums higher by exacerbating supply-side uncertainty, while subsequent price corrections significantly reduced them. In India, day-ahead electricity prices are on average significantly higher than real-time prices resulting in a positive 'risk premium' thus indicating consumers are willing to pay extra to avoid supply uncertainty," he said. —*PTI*

Ganguly set for unopposed return as CAB president

KOLKATA, 21 SEPT

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly is set to return unopposed as Cricket Association of Bengal president at its annual general meeting here on Monday, but his second stint promises to be more challenging with the association hit by financial irregularities and credibility concerns in recent months.

The entire panel led by Ganguly Bablu Kolay (secretary), Madan Mohan Ghosh (joint-secretary), Sanjay Das (treasurer), and Anu Dutta (vice-president) is also set to be elected unopposed.The 53-year-old former BCCI president will be replacing his elder brother Snehasish Ganguly, who had to step down following the six-year cap on executive position. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mithun files nomination for post of BCCI pres

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

Former Delhi captain Mithun Manhas on Sunday filed his nomination for the post of BCCI president at the Board's headquarters here ahead of the deadline later this afternoon. Manhas, who played 157 First-Class, 130 List A, and 91 T20s matches in a long domestic career from 1997-98 to 2016-17, had emerged as a frontrunner to take over the role left vacant by the exit of Roger Binny last month.

The 45-year-old Manhas' name came to the fore after an informal meeting held in New Delhi, during which it was decided to push his name forward for the role of BCCI president. A few other key positions in the Indian cricket board will be filled here next Sunday during the annual general meeting of the Board.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

To win World Cups, you have to be adaptable: Mooney

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Australia batter Beth Mooney believes adaptability and composure are the hallmarks of a champion side, qualities that will once again be tested at the upcoming Women's World Cup.The seven-time winners showcased both traits to perfection. Staring at the possibility of a historic series defeat against India, they responded in style, piling up their joint-highest total of 412 all out before sealing a 43-run win in the third ODI here to clinch the series 2-1 here on Saturday."I think to win World Cups you've got to be the most adaptable team and the most composed team," Mooney said at the post-match press conference. Defending the mammoth target, Australia endured a fierce counterattack, first through Smriti Mandhana's blazing 125 off 63 balls, then via Harmanpreet Kaur's 52 and Deepti Sharma's late flourish of 72. But they held their nerve.*—PTI*

Yamal will win the Ballon d'Or one day: Coach Hansi

BARCELONA, 21 SEPT

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick says his young star Lamine Yamal will "one day" win the Ballon d'Or. The Barcelona forward is among the top candidates to receive the annual award for the world's best soccer player in Paris on Monday. "One day we will see this, that Lamine gets this trophy," Flick said on Saturday when asked at a pre-match press conference at Barcelona's training grounds. Yamal, who turned 18 in July.*—PTI*

Satwik-Chirag pair finishes runner-up at CM

Koreans Kim and Seo reigning world champions

SHENZAN, 21 SEPT

India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty lost in straight games to Korea's Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-jae *PHOTO: X/@CM*

Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty finished runner-up at a BWF World Tour event for the second week in a row, losing to World No. 1 Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-jae in the China Masters Super 750's final in Shenzhen on Sunday.

Koreans Kim and Seo, the reigning world champions, defeated the eighth-seeded Indian duo 21-19, 21-15 in 45 minutes.

Satwik and Chirag had also suffered defeat in last week's Hong Kong Open final. The pair, a two-time World Championships bronze medallist, has been searching for its first title since the Thailand Open in May last year.

In the first game, the Indians seemed to be in control after winning eight straight points to lead 14-7. However, the lefty-right combination of the Koreans bounced back to clinch six points on the trot and close the gap. With the momentum on their side, the top seeds bagged the opener.

The second game was a much closer affair, with the Koreans leading by a solitary point at the mid-game interval. From 11-11, Kim and Seo won four points in a row and kept the Indians at bay to eventually seal the title.

Pramod Bhagat wins gold and silver

India's Pramod Bhagat, Sukant Kadam, and Krishna Nagar brought glory to the country at the China Para Badminton International 2025 with their remarkable performances.

Ace shuttler Pramod made a golden comeback after 18 months, clinching the men's singles SL3 gold medal.

Facing stiff competition from Indonesia's Muh Al Imran, Pramod lost the first set 15-2 but bounced back brilliantly to win the next two sets 21-19, 21-16 and sealed the top prize in a thrilling contest.

This was an emotional victory for Pramod, marking his return to the international circuit after missing the Paris Paralympics due to three whereabouts failures. *—PTI*

ICC WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Hope India women's team breaks WC jinx: Devajit Saikia

MUMBAI, 21 SEPT

Devajit Saikia *PHOTO: PTI*

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia on Sunday hoped that the Indian women's team would end a long wait to win a World Cup trophy when the 50-overs showpiece event begins in Guwahati on 30 September.

India, which is co-hosting the eight-team tournament with Sri Lanka, will take on the team from the island nation in the first match, which will be preceded by an opening ceremony.

India will aim to end a long drought as they have never won the women's World Cup in any of the past 12 editions. "In the past, warm-up matches were held for the ICC (Men's) World Cup, and for the first time, the ICC Women's World Cup will start from Guwahati. The opening match will be played between India and Sri Lanka," Saikia told the media here at the BCCI headquarters.

"As the matches are being held in India as well as in Sri Lanka, everybody is backing our Indian team. Recently, they have done extremely well in England also, which is a big achievement for the Indian team." "The Indian women's cricket team has come of age, and I am sure they will produce a remarkable performance in the upcoming World Cup. I hope that the jinx will be broken this time," Saikia said. Saikia said the recently-concluded ODI series between India and Australia, which the visitors won 2-1, was a "keenly contested" affair. "It was a very keenly contested series, which Australia won 2-1. But India played extremely well. Australia is a very good team, but India is catching up. Till now, India has not won any ICC women's trophy, so this is a big opportunity for the team to do well," he said. The BCCI secretary said 40 minutes of the opening ceremony ahead of the Women's World Cup will be dedicated to Indian singer Zubeen Garg. *—PTI*

Clinical India U19 thump Australia U19 by seven wickets

BRISBANE, 21 SEPT

Teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi showed glimpses of his batting prowess before wicketkeeper Abhigyan Kundu and Vedant Trivedi's unbeaten half-centuries powered India U19 to a comprehensive seven-wicket win over Australia U19 in the first Youth ODI here on Sunday.

Batting first after winning the toss, Australia could muster only 225 for nine thanks to an excellent performance by the Indian bowlers.

The visitors then completed the chase with as many as 117 balls to spare at the Ian Healy Oval, with Kundu and Trivedi remaining not out on a masterful 87 and 61, respectively.

The spotlight was on 14-year-old Suryavanshi, and he responded with a blazing 38 off just 22 balls, his innings containing seven fours.

Such was Suryavanshi's dominance that skipper Ayush Mhatre contributed just six runs in a 50-run opening partnership before the latter was dismissed by pacer Hayden Schiller.

Two balls later, Mhatre was sent back by Charles Lachmund, as India suddenly lost two wickets at the same score.

One-down batter Vihaan Malhotra (9) too failed to make a significant contribution as Lachmund accounted for the batter to leave India at 75 for three in the 10th over and give Australia a glimmer of hope.

However, Trivedi and Kundu joined forces to dash Australian hopes with an unbroken fourth-wicket partnership of 152 runs to complete the chase in only 30.3 overs.

Kundu smashed five sixes and eight fours in his 74-ball knock, while Trivedi struck eight boundaries while facing 69 deliveries. *—PTI*

AZERBAIJAN GP

Max Verstappen wins in Baku as Oscar Piastri crashes out

BAKU, 21 SEPT

Max Verstappen cruised to victory in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix on Sunday as championship leader Oscar Piastri's first-lap crash allowed Lando Norris to cut his points advantage.

Verstappen was in control from start to finish after taking pole position in a chaotic qualifying session on Saturday. George Russell was second for Mercedes, and Carlos Sainz, Jr. was third for Williams' first podium finish in four years.

Norris was seventh as he missed the chance to fully exploit Piastri's error and slash the Australian's lead in the Formula 1 title fight.

Piastri nearly stalled on the grid and dropped to the back of the field before sliding into the barrier as he tried to recover places. The Australian crashed for the second day running in Baku after also hitting the barrier in qualifying.

McLaren could have secured the constructors' title on Sunday with seven races to go, but will now have to wait until at least the next race in Singapore in two weeks. George Russell finished second for Mercedes with Carlos Sainz third for Williams's first podium finish of the season.

Norris started and finished seventh, with his chances of scoring more points scuppered by a slow pitstop for the second successive race. *—PTI*

Max Verstappen *PHOTO: X/@BAKU*

Andy Pycroft is not a schoolteacher: Ashwin

NEW DELHI, 21 SEPT

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has backed match referee Andy Pycroft amid Pakistan's criticism in the post-match handshake controversy, saying the Zimbabwean official is not a "school teacher" and was only doing his job to avoid an unnecessary spectacle. Pycroft was the referee last Sunday when India, as a policy decision, did not shake hands with Pakistan after their Asia Cup match. He was dragged into the controversy after India skipper Suryakumar Yadav did not follow the convention at the toss. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) wrote two emails to the ICC, first requesting Pycroft's removal from the tournament and then seeking his exclusion from their games. Both demands were rejected, with the world body standing firmly behind its Elite Panel referee.

"Andy Pycroft actually saved everybody from seeing such a poor spectacle. India informed the match referee in advance that this is our decision, and we will follow it. That's it. After all this drama, you lost the match. So what are you complaining about?" Ashwin said on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat'.

"He is not a schoolteacher. He's not a principal. He can't go and bring Surya and say, 'Come shake hands'. That's not his job. What exactly is Pycroft's fault here?" he asked. *—PTI*

Ravichandran Ashwin *PHOTO: PTI*

SWIATEK WINS KOREA OPEN TITLE

SEOUL, 21 SEPT

Top-seeded Iga Swiatek overcame a poor first set to beat No. 2-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova 1-6, 7-6 (3), 7-5 and win the Korea Open on Sunday.

Swiatek dropped her own serve five times, was edged out 6-2 in aces, had nine double-faults, and even won fewer points than Alexandrova during a tight contest at Seoul Olympic Park Tennis Center lasting close to three hours. *—PTI*

LPGA event: Aditi is yet to start 2nd round

ARKANSAS, 21 SEPT

Aditi Ashok stayed where she was at 5-under through 18 holes as the weather played spoilsport on day 2 of the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship, an LPGA event, here.

Play was suspended due to dangerous weather conditions as Aditi continued to remain at T-19 position.

Savannah Grewal (T-45) and Gurleen Kaur (T-88) were also unable to start their second round.

Opening round leaders Sarah Schmelzel (8-under) and Minami Katsu (8-under) too could not begin their second round.

Pranavi and Hitaashee tied for 47th place in La Sella Open

Alicante (Spain), Sep 21 (PTI) Pranavi Urs and Hitaashee Bakshi were tied for 47th place with one more round to go in the 2025 La Sella Open here. Pranavi carded an even par 72, while Hitaashee shot 1-over 73. Pranavi had two birdies and two bogeys all on the back nine of the course and between the 13th and the 18th.

Hitaashee had four birdies, but she also gave away three bogeys and a double bogey on the Par-5 ninth. *—PTI*

Sebastian Sawe wins Berlin Marathon

BERLIN, 21 SEPT

Sebastian Sawe of Kenya finished far ahead of his rivals to win the Berlin Marathon on Sunday, when unseasonable warmth thwarted his effort to break the course record.

The 29-year-old Sawe finished in a year's best time of 2 hours, 2 minutes, and 16 seconds – four minutes ahead of Japan's Akira Akasaki and more than 4½ minutes ahead of Ethiopia's Chimdessa Debele.

"I did my best," Sawe said. "I'm so happy."

Sawe's compatriot Rosemary Wanjiru won the women's race in 2:21:05, just ahead of Ethiopia's Dera Dida.

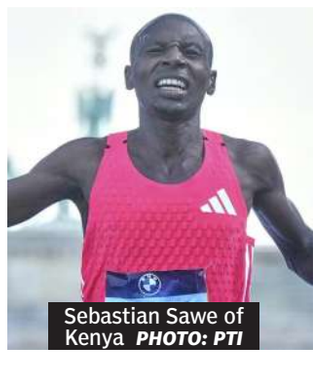
Sawe looked exhausted as the top three were presented with giant alcohol-free beers during their award ceremony.

Kelvin Kiptum's time of 2:00:35 from the 2023 Chicago Marathon is still the world's best. Kiptum was killed in a car crash in February 2024.

On Sunday, temperatures climbed to 24 degrees Celsius (75.2 Fahrenheit) as summer made an unexpected return to the German capital.

"You can't do anything about the weather. I was ready for everything," said Sawe, who said he'd be back next year.

It was already 18 degrees Celsius (64.4 Fahrenheit) when Sawe and the other elite runners made a blistering start, completing the first kilometer faster than any of their predecessors in just 2:44.*—PTI*



Sebastian Sawe of Kenya *PHOTO: PTI*

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sha'Carri, Lyles sweep American 4x100

TOKYO, 21 SEPT

Sha'Carri Richardson and Noah Lyles blasted through the anchor legs of back-to-back wins in the rainy 4x100s Sunday night to close out world championships with a relay sweep for the U.S.

Richardson received the baton with a .01-second deficit against Jamaica, but made it up and then held on for a .04-second margin. The winning time was 41.75 seconds.

It handed teammate Melissa Jefferson-Wooden her third gold medal of the meet and sent 38-year-old Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce home with silver — her 17th medal from the worlds in a career she says is ending this year. Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone anchored the U.S. women to victory in the 4x400, and Cole Hocker won gold in the 5,000 on the best night of the meet for the United States.

The U.S. closed with 26 medals and 16 golds, a more-than-respectable total after a frustrating start. The 26 overall medals are the same number they captured in the same stadium four years ago at the Tokyo Olympics. Only seven were gold that time.

Lyles teamed with Christian Coleman, Courtney Lindsey, and Kenny Bednarek for his second gold to put a hold on the U.S. struggles in the relays. The U.S. won in 37.29 .26 ahead of Canada.

In fact, the Americans have a world-winning streak two in a row, counting two years ago in Budapest. The race was run without Jamaica and its gold and silver medalists, Oblique Seville and Kishane Thompson, from the 100. *—PTI*

Sha'Carri *PHOTO: X/@WORLDS*

Noah Lyles *PHOTO: X/@WORLDS*

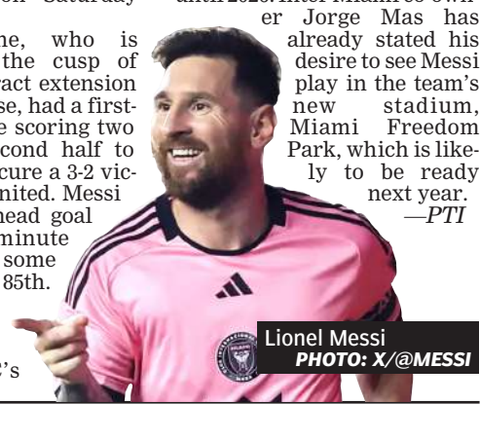
Messi scores two goals as Inter wins against DC

DUBAI, 21 SEPT

Lionel Messi played a direct role in all three of Inter Miami's goals against DC United in the Major League Soccer match on Saturday night.

The Argentine, who is reportedly on the cusp of agreeing a contract extension with the franchise, had a first-half assist before scoring two goals in the second half to help his team secure a 3-2 victory over D.C. United. Messi scored the go-ahead goal in the 66th minute before adding some insurance in the 85th. He has 22 goals this season, one more than Nashville SC's Sam Surridge in the race for the Golden Boot Award.

Reports indicate that Messi is close to signing an extension with the MLS club that would keep him at the club until 2026. Inter Miami co-owner Jorge Mas has already stated his desire to see Messi play in the team's new stadium, Miami Freedom Park, which is likely to be ready next year. *—PTI*



Lionel Messi *PHOTO: X/@MESSI*